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MANY A GREEN ISLE

BY GLANVILLE SMITH

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MANY A GREEN ISLE

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To the JOHN SIMON GUGGENHEIM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION, which helped finance the necessary travel; to the Cold Spring Granite Company, which granted its designer leave of absence to undertake it; to the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Atlantic Monthly*, for permission to reprint material first printed in their pages; and to Cora Gill Smith, the one critic sure to find it excellent, the author of this book gratefully extends his thanks.

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MANY A GREEN ISLE

PREFACE:

OF ISLANDS

ISLANDS AND CONTINENTS ARE THE NATURAL UNITS OF GEOGRAPHY; their coasts are God-made and decisive, whereas frontiers are only arbitrary. Of the two, islands are the dearer to us, as boats are dearer than ships, and puppies are more irresistible than grown-up dogs.

These small parcels of earth, with their sea-kept freshness, seem hopeful of perfection. Utopia was an island. Where evil has to swim to come, perhaps it will stay away; if the rule of beauty, tranquillity, and order is not to be attained on the grand scale—and here one of mankind's oldest daydreams rises comfortingly in our brains—perhaps it can be achieved on a small scale, on some small island, advantageously remote.

I see it now, "my island," wrapped in a silver haze like Christmas cellophane: one craggy hill with a spring gushing at the foot, two venerable trees to swing a hammock between, and a house with a puff of blue smoke pinned to the chimney top. Napoleon, who was born on unimportant Corsica, and died squirming on

minute St. Helena, was continent-crazy. Poor man! What a mania! Most of us fortunately are not like him. An island apiece is all we want, and the smaller, the better.

True, the most isolated islands are made of the same stuff as the continents. The people who live on them find discouragement as easy and death as hard as we do. They are human like ourselves, even if the scope of their mistakes is more limited. In fact they often look with longing across the deeps of air and sea to the continental life we live: the huts we build and the errands we go on seem ampler and finer than theirs. But these same islanders presently can be found looking another way, with gaze focused in inconsistent envy on some islet smaller and less accessible than their own.

However, there are degrees in smallness. St. Cuthbert found Lindisfarne, that scrap of Northumberland stone and dune that served as his mission headquarters, too large an isle to pray on. Thus, to commune in peace with the God of his strength he tucked up his robe at low tide, and waded away from its distractions to one big enough for only a single cell and a few tufts of dime-sized daisies.

St. Cuthbert I have always admired. His feeling for islands, and mine, are brothers. But it is hard to be always so simple in wants as he was. When I imagine my island in detail it tends to grow.

The house on my island of course will be very modest. A right size to play "Annie-Annie-I-Over" over is what I want. But such dimensions reconcile ill with the interior. I must have a cupboard for supplies, a table to eat from, and a bed to sleep on; and then I have thought of installing a small, but not too small, pipe organ. A bounteous library, rich in those roomy, many-volumed works that only people on islands have time to read, also will take space: I see the backs in gilded beauty ranged tier on tier about me.

But it is chiefly when I think of the chairs that my house bulges,

and the island with it. I myself can sit on the bed, but for a friend happening in, it is only polite to provide something better—a wing chair, for example, to face the fire. At this point the hospitable strain in my nature wakens with a leap; friend Friend expands into a dinner party. And since there is nothing more vexatious than to postpone part singing that aches to begin, while clearing up a mess of dishes, a housekeeper here takes her place in a hastily added lean-to kitchen.

Ah me! my island is inhabited after all, I see, as Crusoe knew his was when he found the footprint in the sand. Well, the village on the far cove will provide a barber for me, girls to wink at, and young fry for swimming pals.

Moreover, my suspicion is that inhabited isles are best. Without lewd Caliban and freakish Ariel, Prospero would soon have been stifling yawns among his books; St. Cuthbert, at the next low tide, returned to his staff of missionaries very ready to join their gossip by the fire. Or who can imagine Boswell on Inchkenneth, the isle he picked for his in the Hebrides, banging away at interlopers with the cannon mounted unsociably for the purpose? On the ensuing voyage, in fact, when a rock, strictly forbidding, hove in view and Johnson cried, "This shall be your island and shall be called Inch Boswell," his friend hardly thought it funny. No, life in a hermitage I intend to try some day with full expectation of enjoying it; but the semi-gregarious life I know in advance is what really suits me.

The inhabitants of my island I should prefer to choose, however, or so I think at first. For heaven's sake let them be unmarred by the mad world outside. I like people whose skins glisten and who roll with laughter. And while I am wishing, let them be pretty too. Here rises the vision of some Wedgwood-platter Eden, of palm trees full of nuts, rich-bristling plumes of sugar canes, and a select company of nymphs in Turkish fancy dress, picnicking on the strand. It is my original toy island once again, an

engraver's fantasy from the cartouche on some old ornate map. How finely statuesque the naked savages stand, with their cornucopias of pineapples and bananas! In the sky the East Wind blows out his cheeks, while turtles and porpoises, frolicking in the sea, carve its heavy surface into rococo French-pastry curls.

Armchair islands like these are a delight to visit, and indeed it is not impossible to find them in the pages of old histories. I think of the island at the Ecuadorian harbor mouth, to which the filibusters took the port's prettiest girls, a band of harp and lute players, and hampers of cakes and fruit and wine. Under the sea-grape trees they spread carpets, pitched their pavilion, and whiled away the time needed ashore by the city fathers in hustling up a ransom. No seventeenth-century cartographer, nor china painter of the eighteenth, ever detailed a picnic party more piquantly Arcadian. And the girls, safe again in their parents' arms, vowed that never in their lives had they had a better time.

Oddly enough, if these same young ladies had known, the day before, of the junket that the next day was to bring, it would have seemed dreadful, even nasty. What! fondled by stinking filibusters? Anybody for holiday playmates rather than those fiends, the Lutherans! Given their choice, they would have picked captors of a more familiar stamp, say the class of '42 from Salamanca University.* But they learned from their adventure what I think I know without it, that strangers and surprises give a spice to life, and that no island is complete without them.

If we are to believe what we see on old maps, Neptune was a stranger who used often to bring excitement to the isles. In his shell car, rushing with its teams of white-maned horses in the curve of a flowing wave, he arrived trident in hand. It must have been a picture. Or Columbus, planting the cross of Spain grandiosely on his Indies—what an occasion! He was a dressy man,

* Meaning, of course, the class of 1642.

and treated the Indians, who had never seen clothes before, to the spectacle of European haberdashery in its most gorgeous epoch.

What we miss in our own time I realize most keenly when I realize also that, lugging a suitcase and in a white drill jacket in need of an ironing, I have been the modern-day successor of those personages. At port after port, the full length of Columbus's West Indies I put ashore, their stranger of the twentieth century. And, very properly, no garlands anywhere greeted my arrival, no weed-wreathed tritons blew their conch-shell horns. The colorless tombstone man was met by the immigration officers.

No, I could never be anybody, nor pretend to be anybody for long, but Smith of Cold Spring. It was as if I had just put on my hat after detailing the day's last epitaph or rose, and come away from the untidy drafting room to hobnob as usual with the town's dogs and children on my way to supper.

What a solid world I had left behind! founded on the firm bedrock of granite! No battle, to history's knowledge, has ever disfigured our calm countryside. Day after day, preparing for the slow stresses of eternity, the granite slabs move through the great mill by the river, to take the forms I and my fellow draftsmen set for them: monuments, mausoleums, crosses, footstones, of smoldering dark red, or grays grave and crystalline. And about us, illimitably in all directions from this Minnesota midrib of the continent, away stretches the comfortable sameness of one language, one big, common, kindly way of life.

But even so continental a world can have its islands. Ours, up the Sauk, I have mapped for a hobby, on winter holidays when ice travel has made it easy to take sights; and in summer quote,

> "*Many a green isle needs must be*
> *In the deep wide sea of misery,*
> *Or the mariner, worn and wan,*
> *Never thus could voyage on,*"

while waving an affectionate canoe paddle at still-nameless innocents.

The dark West Indies, however, which loomed for so many months about me from the sea to the clouds, had weltered in a misery less cheerfully to be borne than mine, which is of the *Il Penseroso* sort, for the most part, very tolerable. Plagues and piracy, slavery, revolt, grog-swilling, greed, and endless wars by sea and land, had been the blue vats in which they were all but drowned in their wild infancy, with middle age no less frantic for the unluckier of them. It seemed awful, in scenes like these, to go ashore in pert felt hat, without salute or ceremony.

Yet these history-drenched islands, with haze of blue still in their steep-plumed ravines, were youthful enough. They made me—from my far newer part of the New World—feel even a little elderly. For all the woes and upsets of an exhausting career, they had kept alive the core of their primitive island peace, like a bulb hid in the ground, flowering afresh in its own quiet season.

Empires might founder and civilization turn turtle in the brine, but here were remnants of the good earth for a worn mariner to steer to. The cliffs of Dominica still fronted their vermilion on the windward surf, coconuts thrust new roots into the salty sand, guavas dropped, and dragonflies mated innocently in the sun. The verdure-framed waterfalls of Jamaica gushed as freely as in the days of no trouble at all—those days when in my small-boyhood's album I feasted on pictures of them, on the stamps, and first hankered and resolved to know the islands.

But peace finds refuge too in the lives of the simplehearted. What good company such people are! Their prayers must go up with a special efficacy. For though Adam's curse weighs on us all, we all share likewise in the inheritance of the dream of Eden —of which dream's harmony these souls, never desperate for its recapture, most nearly achieve the earthly counterpart. Even the

cities we build, thanks to their presence, can have a haunting kinship with the lost paradise.

Thus, and though political economy is a timelier concern, and emergencies require that we be up, constantly, and shooting, the shores and hills and islanders that I learned to know had some of the old healing secret in their trust. The Negro grandmother, for example, fast asleep in the armchair by her door, with hands folded and glasses crooked, no doubt had a snore meant specifically for me.

I had a message for her too perhaps. At any rate she was glad to wake up and meet someone new. Tombstone designers do not come in on every boat, curious to try what joys lie this side of the tombs that are their business. My small talk and pert Cold Spring hat had a gleam of the romantic in them for the lady.

While climbing the islands' hill roads, in fact, it was with secret delight that I saw housewives topple from doorsteps, craning their necks for a more prolonged view of the stranger. Not even Columbus, in furred cloak and brocaded doublet, could have been more a cynosure. To a Smith whose unsung task, daily, is to lay out the pithless epitaphs of nobodies like himself, making eyes bug so, for once, was quite exhilarating.

Zest faded, however. Such fun soon grows tiresome. A trip at home down Main Street is more nourishing to the spirit. No, what I wanted of these poor islanders was to have their peace for mine, too; to build my house near theirs, light my coal-pot, and be taken for granted as a neighbor. Not for nothing was I born a nobody. We Smiths know the comfort of being inconspicuous.

In fact, as it happens in these often dark-skinned isles, the white visitors' problem is not how to be remarkable but how to be familiar—as the physicist's is to know the atom without altering it with his mere curiosity. When Neptune arrives, the altars immediately smoke, and princes of the blood find all ports in the midst of carnival. I see why Haroun al Raschid loved his frowzy

disguises, and Jove watched Europa's lawn party from the upturned eyes of a grazing bull: even a Smith, tiptoeing in, can upset the naturalness of places.

Luckily, the physicist, though he may have no way of prying unsuspected into his atom's private life, can deduce a few facts from its behavior in his company. A traveler must content himself with similar part-knowledge. Even what the steam-roller tourist learns has its truth: when he unboxes his camera and pleads, "Don't stand in a row, folks, look natural!—here, madam, please go on spanking your baby as you were when I drove up," there is a chance that he will get a not-worthless photograph. The statistical-minded who pay calls on governors and ask searching questions bring away facts of a kind at which I do not sniff. Indeed, I wish I had these people's nerve.

But I haven't. I feel too little assurance to bustle around like that, and distrust too much my own replies to deep-probing questions. Inexplicably, however—and it must set the moralists to scratching their heads—God's bounty is often bestowed on those who neither sue for nor deserve it.

When I went to the ford at Jacmel to bathe a pair of hot feet, why was it to me, recumbent and unarduous, that He sent the Haitian playing a long-necked lute with big loose-fingered hands, instead of to my hard-working shipmates elsewhere in the city, with their cameras and their binoculars and their determination to see all? Perhaps He likes to hand gifts to people who are pleased to have got something. My friends, true enough, would not have been satisfied with that day's bounty. What they wanted while ship was in port was to witness a Voodoo sacrifice, human preferred.

I see it again now, that chance port of call on the Havana-ward and homeward voyage: the far ring of the blue Haitian mountains, crumpled and solemn, the bursts of palm foliage, the banks of canes, the women lifting their skirts sky-high to flounder

through the rushing water, the hyacinths bobbing along on their pale green floats. Here would have been a place to establish my house and boil my rice, with lizards twittering in the thatch, and the world streaming past the door on its old, hard, simple errands.

Where bridges have not yet been built, lute music has a chance at natural survival. It did not die, after all, with the filibusters who sang to it between kisses on their Ecuadorian island. But this black boy's music was by no means archaic. It was contemporaneous and healthy. It had a supple robustness to it, as well as the delicacy and sweetness I should have expected from the instrument.

Thought of that music makes me—no, not ambitious; ambition connotes too cocksure a bent of mind. Let me say "hopeful," rather—hopeful that there is a book of islands for me to write, neither in the jazz tourist idiom, nor grand-operatic: one peacefully insular, in which the monkeyshines and singing of that great orpheum, the West Indies, are told of, and its melancholy-gay actors' backstage jokes and prayers. For when a rampaging fate whirls us we know not whither and divorces islands from their old affinities, even so modest a quest as mine can have its worth, if, in kind honesty, it reveals a little of how things were somewhere, yesterday, and how that character outlived day before yesterday's distresses.—Or must everybody, like my shipmates, have gore spilled to be satisfied?

Lute music, as I came to understand at the Jacmel ford that day, is the sort of thing I hanker for in a loud age. I should count it grace indeed to be given grace to make some—especially if there are a few friends to enjoy it with me, in a cheerful island intimacy.

Chapter I.

MRS. NIBLICK LIVES IN GOUYAVE, ON THE lee shore of Grenada. It is a steep shore, shaggy with leafage, but at Gouyave a river bursts from a cleft in it to push out an apron of delta which the town just fills. Above the red roofs two church towers stand slim against the blue deeps of the valley; the outmost houses overhang the sea wall's curve: here, for a dry oasis between watery sea and juicy vegetable kingdom, is a man-made nest of brick. But one arc of beach has been left open for the fishermen, with coconut trees shooting up behind it like green sky-rockets transfixed in mid explosion.

At sight of a picture so pretty I broke into applause, sailing by on a schooner St. George's-bound. It might very well have been the town on the far side of my own island, compact and sociable —though one single church tower in a small-scale Arcady like mine would be enough. "The Church's One Foundation," as it happened, was the hymn the crew sang as we came sailing by; very boisterously they had just been chasing one another with the hatchet, but now their mood changed. Down they dropped and in unbashful black-boy voices sang of salvation, lying sprawled out, heads on hands.

From St. George's there were busses aplenty to carry me back to Gouyave if I wanted to go: the "Dignity," the "Modesty," and the "Western Pride" drew up in a tempting row each after-

noon to take on ice cakes and gesticulating passengers. But where should I stay when I reached Gouyave? The super-sergeant at police headquarters, smiling kindly from behind his mustachios, told me to put my trust in Providence.

It was all the encouragement I needed. Off I packed, while the super-sergeant, amused to be serving as Providence's arm, hopped unseen into a seat behind me and down again when I did at my destination. "Primus will find a bed for you," he announced when a deputy constable, barefoot and in tatters, touched his cap. And Primus led the way to Mrs. Niblick's.

Mrs. Niblick, as I was to learn, was a trim high-brown, a grass widow full of dimples and vivacity. She owned a nutmeg grove in the mountains and a home of her own in town, atop a shop on Main Street. Through an archway Primus ushered me, up a passage, and into her cobbled court.

Here was a brick oven agape like Moloch, the kitchen, shower-bath, and a broad stone staircase mounting to the gallery. I soon was seated in my hostess's drawing room, and so was Primus, picking something from his back teeth with his finger. "Take care you don't split yourself right open," said Mrs. Niblick, giving me a nudge. Then down the stairs she charged, to bake coconut bread for supper, while my mentor and I sallied out to buy provisions.

Before the oranges, avocados, and cabbage were taken home, we enjoyed a session in the rumshop end of a dark grocery, with iced sweet wine to loosen up our voices.

"Carnival songs what the gentleman best enjoy," Primus informed the newcomers. As deputy constable and the white foreigner's first friend in Gouyave, he ostentatiously took charge. "Antoine," he commanded, "sing 'Fire Brigade' for the gentleman!"

"My voice not good this evening," Antoine protested, indulg-

ing in a stage cough for politeness's sake. But then happily out came:

Smoke! smoke! fire
Brigade, lundi, mardi
Corna corné,

a humorous ditty, half in Creole French.*

"Aurelian, sing 'One Day I Met an Old Woman'," continued Primus with a wink at me; he too was a traveled man, having seen Curaçao, and thus could look with detachment on this rustic powwow.

It was a sorrow to Aurelian that I was not a brother Mason, but a swig of wine unstopped his throat, and out rumbled a Trinidad calypso enumerating the endless contents of an Obea-woman's basket.

Goly-root, ninny-root,
Bitter Italian, stinking toe,

he sang, until, "Speaking of stinking toe," I was forced to interpose, "maybe my hostess is waiting to boil this cabbage."

But she wasn't. It was destined for Monday's soup kettle. The coconut bread was baked, however, and piping hot. She handed me a disk of it at supper, big as a steering wheel, and sat across the corner of the table to watch me eat it. Billy, the black butler, toiled in and out fetching things up from the kitchen—the rice, the jackfish, the fried plantain, and oily Creole chicken. He was aged ten, and where a good shirt most scrupulously should have covered it, his fat belly was exposed. "Billy Belly," Mrs. Niblick called him, tickling the irresistible, whereupon our butler would double up, giggling, with the teapot in his hands.

We then made up my bed, spreading open a crisp-folded

* The French half: "Monday, Tuesday, conch shell blowing."

sheet and buttoning the pillows in the pillowcases. "You're so simple!—so soft!" cried Mrs. Niblick, meaning (I hope) that there were no stand-off airs about me. When she bid her guest an affectionate good night, rain had begun to fall outside in the warm gloom. Gouyave was as still as the country. But near and regularly there came a homelike sound: before I rolled over on the clean hard bed, with its valence stretched around the post tops like valentine lace paper, I peeped into the gallery and found Billy, for a watchman, faithfully snoring on the floor.

"Good morning," said Mrs. Niblick next day, sauntering past the shower bath.

True enough, it was a radiant Sunday, as I could see plainly from my suds. The bath, in an arch under the courtyard stairs, was afforded privacy by a low gate over which the bather could chat with whoever happened to be about, and view the Anglican church spire pointing a didactic finger toward the blue.

"If you're going to church, let me go with you," I proposed, turning the valve for a final drenching. But as it proved, she hadn't done such a thing for months. Gouyave parish, like Anglican parishes everywhere in the islands, was in the throes of rising from Low to High Church ritual; the goings-on of the rector made her adrenal glands boil over. However—so it dawned on her—to take me would let her gauge progress made without betraying any lessening of her disapprobation of it. So she put on her best hat and black net gloves when the bell rang, and soon, to the organ's wheeze, we were singing the hymns and trying not to sound too noisy.

The rector, sure enough, held his hands in special ways while

reading the Gospel, and cracked his brow on the chancel pavement in abject veneration of the Host. Between transports, however, as Mrs. Niblick was pleased to note, he gawked some at the unexplained white man in the congregation. But then in the sermon he lost himself once more, soaring in spirit to those realms where the mystical is the true reality, and blunders made by organists during a sung Eucharist blessedly cease to gall.

"As if there weren't a real Roman church just down the street!" fumed Mrs. Niblick on the way home. She clenched a fist inside a black net glove. But presently a more charitable concern took her attention: where could a proper shirt be found for Bill, who like the rest of the town's authentic Catholics was to march in the afternoon's Rosary Procession? One belonging to her late husband perhaps would do—one left when he went off to the larger life of New York. Turning the sleeves back two or three times would make it "fit."

Primus, that afternoon, also had managed improvements in his dress. For style's sake he perspired richly in a wool suit borrowed from his cousin Prince; it was of a cinnamon tint, and the fedora that rested not lightly on his ears was gray. "Today hot, hot, hot!" he bleated, dragging the hat off to swab his brow.

The worsted suit, in fact, threatened to worst him even before the procession got under way. We had taken our place in seats reserved for the Blessed Sacrament League, as it happened, to which league he owed eleven months' back dues. But I did not know this and Primus was too mortified to ask to move; so while he sat at a self-effacing diagonal on the out-edge of the pew and melted like lard, I joined the members in good standing heartily in their hymn and admired the common-sense informality used by the priest in setting his big parade in motion.

Out of doors, Primus expanded to fit his suit again. The whole countryside had come to town, before which throng it was a treat to be seen hobnobbing with the white foreigner. I was

introduced to relatives by the dozen, especially brothers and sisters of a perplexing variety of names. Friends, too, were floridly presented; but of any who showed too great a readiness to join the party, Primus had cautionary gossip to whisper in my ear. "This man try to milk you, he two times in jail already," was the insidious message; or, of some grinning shaver, "He look little, but he a big crook, big, big, big!" For the perquisites due the visitor's guide and counselor—tobacco, rum, or a chance shilling—he did not care to see diffused vainly among the multitude.

Aurelian, however, was irrepressible, and Antoine the fisherman could not be shaken off. Nor did I help Primus much to shake them, but forgave the old jail terms he significantly mentioned and treated them all to smokes.

Antoine showed us the boat he was helping build: the log, fetched ponderously from the hills to the tune of singing, and hollowed out now, was full of moistened sand to make it gape still farther. Planks lay ready for the gunwales.

Aurelian's specialty was the girls. "Never a man come to Gouyave speak nicer about other men's wife' dresses!" he trumpeted, urging me to eloquence with a wave of his pipe. They were all in their best; it was a pleasure to pay compliments. Or where he felt it would be acceptable, he pushed the conversation into suggestive byways, which made the girls squirm and titter and threaten to box his ears.

Meanwhile the Rosary Procession came winding through the streets. The band played; and the burnished-faced scouts in purple neckerchiefs and bright green caps marched like a troop of happy bugs. The St. Anne's Guild and Blessed Sacrament League trudged behind their banners. Billy Belly footed it with the parochial school children, and eight young ladies in blue veils made a winsome convoy for the canopied Virgin. Last of all, and helped

along as necessary, came the town's unfortunates, the blind and crippled, bringing their difficulties for an offering.

The labor of watching his friends parade made Primus thirsty, at least he insisted I must be parched. Since it was Sunday the rumshops were all shut up; but a deputy constable is not without resource. We were soon clinking glasses in a merchant's storeroom, where Primus, when moist enough again for speech, was warmed by his drink to a manly strain. His anecdotes tended toward the boastful. "If you sin, Primus sure to catch you," grinned Antoine; for his friend, not regularly on the force, earned his best fees detecting small evasions of the law and bringing them to court for a cure.

"This detective business win nobody' thanks," mourned Primus, nevertheless. "Sweat, slave, up early, run legs off, late to bed—small pay, no uniform, and the whole world give you black looks. That what a man get for keeping people honest."

"Why you don't till that field you got at Grand Mal and live happy?" asked Aurelian, taken aback. "Nobody cuss you for that."

Primus spit.

"There no respect for agriculture," he stated flatly. And with a reminiscent grin he launched on tales of further exploits. His chest expanded.

"Take care, man," warned our host. "Before you know it, you feel so big you beg to pay the bill."

Outside again, we found the sunset pouring its gold into Gouyave from seaward. While the girls innocently strolled by, the boys sat in rows on the bridge rails; the little Virgin had been put away in the big plain church and the priest had gone home to his supper.

"Hullo!" cried Primus. "Who leave this blue bicycle by the door? Who see my cousin Prince in town?"

"Prince gone," a fat woman told him, leaning peacefully out

of her window across the street. "Gone, gone, gone. He ride home to Grand Mal on the lorry."

"That Prince, he go to St. George's without his pants on, he so forgetful," complained Primus. "Ain't no fools like you' relations. Here the dent that come when he lean she on a mule' hind leg," he pointed out, taking the handle bars.

"I no see you' cousin bring no bicycle," said the fat woman, lighting her pipe.

It was an implication that made Primus huffy. "What you think, woman?" he demanded, spreading his hands; "don't I ride Prince's bike often enough to know she? Ignor*ant*! I just cycle back to Grand Mal, and give the fool a cussing. In the morning, Chief, I reckon I see you again," he added, not to neglect future business. But morning was to find me afoot among the hills: it was a program that reminded him of less strenuous duties.

"Evening, then," he promised; "Primus never forget he friends." And off he rode, hand briskly on the bell.

"That deputy of yours," said Mrs. Niblick, pouring tea, "rides by as big as a full-time constable. Maybe he smells one of his friends trading twopence-worth of mace sweepings without a license. Humph!" And so on. She didn't think much of Primus. "Not because he admires my beauty, he sits so close when I ride to St. George's on the bus," she sniffed; "he thinks he'll learn something. 'Permit me to assist you with those bundles,' he begs: pugh! how he sweats! All the same," she mused, nodding across the table, "it was sweet of him to bring you here."

"Right-o," I agreed, reaching for more jackfish. We had our usual lively mealtime chat. But then I went out for a draught of

solitude, and to see Grenada's steep lee shore by starlight; "Good night, good night," people said, passing barefoot like noiseless shadows, till one man stopped to take my hand.

It was Aurelian. I had strayed into his village and must come with him to meet his wife and neighbors. As each cabin took shape beside us in the gloom, he knocked and bawled, "Here the Englishman from America!" And presently a lamp would be thrust out and a dazed black face. "Make yourself known!" Aurelian would trumpet, waving his hand in a jovial and lofty gesture.

At the lane's end, where the banana and chocolate groves tipped over a bank above the sea, was Aurelian's own cabin, small, gray, and rickety. "Make yourself known!" he cried here too, waving a glad hand toward his wife. From the dresser on which the household's dishes were arranged, a chimneyless lamp shone on the blue of her frock and the hands quietly folded over the baby sleeping in her lap. She had marched with the St. Anne's Guild that afternoon, but now her lace hat was put away, as was Aurelian's man-about-town air. They were at home again and settled back in home's unostentation.

An older daughter, down with the fever, lay out of sight behind a flowered cotton screen; Justina, of a midway age, perched on her father's knee and turned one foot up to show where a thorn had broken in it. "Tomorrow we prick that out!" promised Aurelian, trumpet-voiced as usual.

"I have one in my hand, too," I told her; for scrambling up a cliff in Antigua to look at orchids, I had buried a prickly-pear spine in the knuckle ridge.

"Antigua very far away," sighed Aurelian's wife. It reminded her of Harlem where an aunt lived. "Very cold, now, in America," she remarked, her aunt having written her that news.

It was a well-worn topic; however, I elaborated, telling them about fishing through the ice, sundogs, and the ear muffs we had

to wear. But for any telling of mine—so I thought, tramping back to Gouyave through the dark—how could these people know what winter was in the North? How, in their nutmeg groves, could they see the gnarled oaks, stiff with fortitude, enduring the frost-mist of a night in Cold Spring? or the long granite sheds shining in the snow, with my tombstones piled beside them as if all mankind were waiting for a burial?

Like an iceberg detached from the polar floe, here I was, bobbing from one of their fruity islands to another. Why didn't I melt? The first glacier-like visit of the North had thawed back, sure enough, to leave Grenada to its Negroes. Cold, slow, drastic, implacable, the ghost of that white juggernaut loomed before me in the road.

Absent-mindedly I walked through it. The northern Old World had pushed in here not to improve the New, though it assumed it was certain to do so, but to better its own fortunes. Columbus's and Queen Isabella's dream of native communities of Christians was to be fulfilled perversely; for in their time, as it suddenly occurred to me, the technique of converting the heathen had gone to pot.

Tickled to have hit on an idea of my own, I sat on a handy bridge parapet to elaborate it.

When St. Cuthbert won the barbarous North British, for example, the missionary frontier had almost reached its limit. Christendom, with the infidel deaf to argument at its back, had toiled to the last chilly island outposts. Not spreading the Kingdom, but aggrandizing its inner structure now busied the Church. When Marco Polo tried to persuade Rome to send the missionaries to China that the Great Khan so earnestly had invited, he had a devil of a time. A Borgia ascended St. Peter's throne in 1492. Poor West Indians! at just this juncture, with the Church ripe for its Reformation, their hot sweet islands suddenly were discovered.

And of the first official bringer of enlightenment to the New World savages, Buyl, the Benedictine of Columbus's second voyage, not even the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* has a kind word to say —so I have noticed since.* Besides, the theology of his era condemned as degenerate any people less civilized than their father Noah. These backsliders, stark naked, had lost even the shame of their mother Eve! Washing his hands of them, and Columbus too, the Vicar Apostolic angrily boarded the first vessel bound back to Spain.

To the credit of the Spanish church it must be admitted, nonetheless, that by the time the extinction of the islanders was assured, the forgotten technique had been relearned enough to spare so clean a sweep on the mainland. The first priest to say his first Mass in the New World, in fact—Las Casas, ordained at La Vega in Santo Domingo—became the great champion of the Indians. He had seen sights to give his religion its blaze of social fury: potential converts strung up twelve to a gibbet in honor of the Twelve Apostles, and such items.

In zeal to save the remnant of the island race, Las Casas urged bringing in black labor from Africa. For whereas the Arawaks of the Greater Antilles sickened in mine or cane field, the few slaves introduced already from Europe seemed to thrive. Moreover, the Spanish blacks were the successful product of a missionary enterprise of a kind. Ravaged out of heathendom for their souls' good, in Spain they had absorbed Christianity from their masters. Slavery, so the slavers said, was the Africans' one chance at heaven: thought of that three-centuries-used excuse brought a sad taste to my mouth.

Yes, such was the slave trade's seed, innocently moral. Having sowed it, Las Casas, like a whirlwind, rushed off to the Latin

* The Vatican cannot strictly be blamed for the choice, since Buyl was sent out on authority of a forged papal bull.

mainland where, thanks in part to his prodigious ministry, the Indians to this day are the major race.

But as for Grenada here about me, with its blobs of cacao leaves drooping against the sky, and streams tumbling unseen in the hollows, its fate had not lain in Spain's hands, for Spain left the Lesser Antilles uncolonized. Here, the native Caribs, though full of fight, had been dispossessed by the North Europeans, which Northerners soon put into practice the Spanish scheme of working the land with blacks. Aurelian and his wife, Primus, and Mrs. Niblick, were the moraine of foreign material that the glacial drive had dumped. Even these trees about me, bamboo, mango, citrus fruit, breadfruit, cacao, and the nutmegs of the mountains, had been brought in like that greatest bonanza of all, sugar, in the huge transformation of West Indian geography.

What life was in the West Indies when that drive was at its liveliest is not hard to guess. Down from the parapet I hopped and tramped off, disturbed by the idea. Restoration and eighteenth century England had sent a gay set of planters and military to the isles, and so had the France of Louis XIV and Louis XV. It was an age of gaming and sexual naughtiness in Europe, which habits, magnified on a tropical frontier, made an uproarious world in which the black newcomers were to learn Christian manners. The buccaneers illumined it especially with their lurid lives. Only the Quakers and Jews, as groups, understood that the Africans were being depraved while being civilized, and did what they could on their own estates to bring justice to the process.

But here below me were Gouyave's two towers in the starlight, that pair of guideposts pointing the way to bliss. Built to call white congregations to worship, they had been inherited by the meek. Half pillowed in soft treetops now in benign old age, they looked toward each other dreamily over the sleeping roofs: the Catholic belfry, symbol of Grenada's French regime, and the Anglican spire, of the British supercession.

Early and firmly, in the French and Spanish colonies, Rome had laid the foundation for its island towers. Though it was a slaveholding, and thus essentially a whites' institution, the baptism of slaves was mandatory. The age might be naughty, but at least God's followers were numerous on the books.

The English church, however, clung religiously to the tenet that, being animals, Negroes were incapable of salvation. Marriage among them was discountenanced as profane; they bred more liberally, in fact, without it. When good Lady Nugent, the governor's wife, came out to Jamaica in 1802, she was appalled to learn that her King's House staff was made up of the unbaptized, unwed, and unevangelized.

Meanwhile—and who was I to criticize them for it?—the blacks held to the practices of Guinea as tenaciously as they could. To this day, their magic pervades the islands, communal ways of working, and an un-European, large, loose sense of family relationship. However, the Jews and Quakers were not the last teachers to exert on them an earnestly well-meant influence. By the mid-eighteenth century the Moravians had begun their labors in Antigua and the Virgin Islands: the almost Darwinian concept was dawning, that people who were degenerate from Noah's standard were still capable of regeneration. Fired in their turn, the Wesleyans rushed in, and finally the secular educators.

But the reward for good works seems often a little sour. When Virtue finally guided West Indian policy and the slaves were not only Christianized but married and emancipated, the islands ceased to yield much profit. Or perhaps the radical historians are right, that the profit decline had somewhat to precede Virtue's triumphant entry. In any event, back thawed the glacier of Northern exploitation to the latitudes from which it came.

In Grenada, here around me, was a specimen of what the glacier left. After the excitements of the Rosary Procession, Gouyave had gone peacefully to bed. The waves washed on the fishermen's beach as they had in Carib times, but inside these

houses black and colored Christians snored, not Queen Isabella's Indians. Even though her church (in French hands) had been persecuted here by the British of another day, and the French themselves during their godless Revolution had captured this very town for the cult of Reason, Catholicism was still very much alive. The tired priest could sleep in confidence of a good tomorrow. The rector, too—that other white chip off the old block of the North—could dream with easy heart of candles and canonicals: his High Church party it was, among the Anglicans, that had put in the best licks in the island vineyard.

But if the dreams of either man were troubled by the sins of their parishioners, I hoped they knew that the black devils of Africa were not the sole ones to blame. The European colonists were a transient lot and by no means all bad; but their white devils, like the telltale legacy of their blood, had come to the isles to stay.

Next night I helped Mrs. Niblick strip the mace from her day's nutmeg harvest.

While infant Billy and she had walked six miles into the mountains, climbed trees and scrabbled hour after hour for the nuts, and then walked home with a bushel apiece on their heads, I had been not quite so strenuous. I had climbed to the nutmeg groves, true enough, and found them as shadowy and lacy as the beech groves of the North. But then through plantations of fern-clad cacaos on the lower slopes, and among villages where hydrangeas bloomed as big as basketballs, I had come down and eaten my lunch on a flat rock in the river.

It was an odd picnic: dust-dry coconut bread with a jar of guava jelly. But there were oranges to wet my whistle, and for

spiritual refreshment a pamphlet on *The Necessity of Purgatory*, picked up from the rector's rack.

Primus, it proved, had fallen meanwhile into one of those purgatories that await the boastful. "There's only one Primus in Grenada," declared Mrs. Niblick, setting the lamp on the floor by the nutmeg pile, "but plenty of blue bicycles. He got called quick from headquarters when the real owner of the one he rode home yesterday heard who took it. Primus made trouble for him, once; now comes tit for tat. Hee! hee! and the big way he clashed the bell! I reckon I can take my mace to town this week without having him eye the parcel."

"Good riddance of an ugly face," said her sister. The three of us worked on the floor, our shadows towering on the termite-riddled walls.

"I'm glad I got a picture of Primus, yesterday," I remarked, pulling the red mace from my heap of nuts. "He stood by your oven for it, like a cinnamon bun just baked. But by the way," I thought to ask, "that cinnamon-colored suit *was* his cousin Prince's?"

"Was it!" cried Mrs. Niblick, rolling back on the floor to laugh the harder. "Prince stripped him like a nutmeg when he got home at last. Here comes Sunday and his good suit gone. Primus borrowed it while he took a wash, or so Prince says."

"And the hat?" I faltered.

"That hat fits him so big, I reckon it's his," said Mrs. Niblick. "Let's be kind and say so."

"Primus don't make me feel kindly," said the sister. "What good in this world is a man like him?"

"Why," said Mrs. Niblick, sitting up again, "it's nice to have something to complain about and Primus makes a very good pest. Only he's a clown, too, and always keeps us laughing. My nutmegs on the floor here wouldn't be worth the picking if the world didn't need some spice."

Chapter II.

JASON APPERLY'S FATHER WAS JUDGE Apperly, who also was father to his brother Murchison. "We got one father and one mother," Jason several times told me. It was a point of pride, for such things are not to be taken for granted in Dominíca. Their mother was a laundress and a very good woman.

Although there are few white people in Dominíca, those few are divided into two groups. There is the group of correctly based opinion, to which the government officials properly adhere; and there is the wrongheaded group that does not bother to maintain decorum in all its branches. British now, Dominíca was long French; and since its nearest neighbors are Guadeloupe and Martinique (still French), and its empire trade has been less active than once-French Grenada's, a Gallic flavor continues to pervade the island. The old, easy Latin carelessness in racial distinctions not only has made its people beautiful, but draws to it swank present-day Britons, who are devoted to John Bull at heart but delighted to live under somebody else's code.

The judge, who should have been a beacon of British right thinking in this twilight zone, turned out more wrongheaded than the oddest of the nudists. Seventeen miscellaneous christenings he had paid for when he went to his eternal rest. But as he often remarked with an unregenerate sigh, there probably had been omissions in the rush of events.

All this I did not know until long after I had bidden the boys good-by. I had wondered about their father but had forborne asking questions. However, when I did hear the story it was no surprise to learn that he was a brilliant Englishman.

The boys' mother was alive and I met her: a hard-working colored woman, who, when she had no clothes to wash, skilfully stuffed giant frogs and beetles and other such portable island monsters and varnished them to sell to sailors and tourists. Jason assisted in this enterprise, it was one of the several in which he was proficient. His nimble fingers converted cashew nuts into grotesque monkey heads on which he glued sea shells or bits of calabash rind for hats. When a ship came into port he would climb aboard with baskets of these things and vend them; while Murchison, who was an apprentice tailor, solicited pressing for himself or quick laundry work for his mother. Jason was fourteen, Murchison, nineteen, and since they were both polite brown boys of a trim appearance, they usually got their share of what business happened to be going.

This, too, I learned when I already knew the family. I had arrived in Roseau after roasting all night in a ship's third-class dormitory with the blacks and Chinamen: each of us had had a shelf to roast on, and the Chinese, who were models of patience, showed the rest of us how to do it. You just lie down flat and suffer, and by and by morning comes and the ordeal is over. The purser, who happened to observe me starting ashore with my dormitory mates, was much upset. "Your ticket entitles you to leave by the first-class gangway!" he protested, looking sweaty. But it seemed absurd to make a porter carry my bags amidships for a stylish exit; and if I had I should have met the Apperlys at once and brushed them aside, not supposing I was interested in nut grotesques or tailoring. They would have remembered me as a cool, not to say frost-nipped cucumber. As it was, I went down

the back way where no vendors nor dry-cleaners looked for business and met the boys later on a social footing.

Jason I met first. It was on the jetty after the ship had gone and the day's rains had cleared the sky for a gold and turquoise sunset. The occasion was so natural and easy that I have forgotten how we came to speak. But from the first we recognized each other as equals, which spared a great deal of bother.

Jason liked it very much, for instance, that I was polite and friendly with everybody, and I appreciated the same rule of life very much in him. One day another boy attached himself to me in hope of earning something: he was politeness itself where I was concerned, but when the girls came by with their baskets on their heads, he taunted them with scraps of lewd songs in Creole French expecting to amuse me. As for the lame or weak-eyed, he had a heartless nickname for every one, and after he had hooted it till they menaced him with their sticks he would split with laughter. Jason knew how I enjoyed this walk, he always knew what I was up to when we were not together. However, I mentioned to him that I had been befriended by a friend of his, one Gerald, whereupon his lip flickered in a grimace of disdain.

He had his opinion, too, of white people's indelicacies. Up the valley another day when my tribe of colored small-boy followers was larger than usual, we were stopped by a down-at-heel ex-planter who came sprinting out of his house to chat with a fellow human, as he called me. There was certainly a great deal of talk pent up in him; he was like the hermit in *Rasselas*, only too ripe for intercourse with the outside world. But presently he took note of his inferiors, my companions. "Whose boy are you?" he asked each one in turn, and got for reply, Captain This's or Tom That's. "These youngsters are like the mule that knows only his father," he tittered. "They don't brag about being their mothers' children!"

At this the boys looked sour. Jason grabbed up a stone and

sailed it into the hedge. I too was offended. "In my country when a stranger asks a boy whose child he is, he names his father," I pointed out; "that is, unless he thinks the stranger is more likely to know his mother. Perhaps," I went on, inspired, "you would know these boys' mothers better than their fathers?"

"Hee! hee! hee!" giggled the ex-planter. But he let the topic drop.

Usually it was Jason, however, who gave the bright tone to our endless conversation. He had a natural knowledge of what was interesting, and would break into the story of *The Monkey and the Bag of Honey*; or perhaps it would be some violent tale of cross-purpose island love and murder. Of the gross facts of life he was already thoroughly in command at fourteen; there was no thing or act that he hesitated squarely to name if it came within the scope of his story. I sometimes looked sideways in astonishment at him to find anyone so genuinely superior to the sly.

"Difé, maman, difé!
Avant la line la levé,"

he would sing in a not very tuneful voice, swinging the waterproof Carib basket that carried our dry clothes and picnic provisions.* He knew the coarse songs as well as his friend Gerald did, and loved Carnival time when rude jokes and lampoons were in order.

But he also knew the names of birds and plants and what they were good for in this rainy world of lawnlike roads and perpetual cascades of gushing mountain water. On the Morne he was small boy enough when showing me the old cannon to insert an imaginary ball and sizzle like the fuse. "Bang!" he barked, throwing his body back; we both looked out to sea where an imaginary

* Free translation: "Hot stuff, old girl, hot stuff! before the moon comes up." *Difé* (fire) is from the two words, *du feu.*

ship lay, and "Zowie!" he cried, leaping into the air when it was blown to smithereens. "A direct hit," he reported with relish.

One thing that Jason liked very much to talk about was his future. He had it planned. Of course the present was very lively: in addition to being a taxidermist, and cashew-nut artist, and salesman, he was a commercial fisherman on a small scale, a boat carpenter, guide, and gardener. He umpired cricket games and was the Jubilee swimming and diving champion of his age in Roseau. His present earnings not only paid for his clothes and keep, but covered the rent on the family's provision ground in the hills. Besides, he always had twopence for the cinema on Friday which was bargain day, and when he felt exceptionally rich and happy he would come home with a frosted layer cake from the baker's for a treat for everybody.

All the same, the future was brighter. In Guadeloupe there was great need for hotel servants who could speak English, and since he was at home both in English and Creole French, he was going to go over and while butlering learn to speak book French. After this he intended to be a seaman, and work up to the rank of second officer. The British marine he knew would never give a man of his color such an opportunity, and he was realist enough to concede that captain's rank was all but out of reach even with the tolerant French. But as high as it was reasonable to aim he set his mark.

Or sometimes Jason would talk about the supernatural. I enjoyed this especially, because his anecdotes were firsthand.

Once, for instance, when he was little more than a baby, the Devil had come to him in the family's cliff-top garden in the guise of a familiar neighbor woman wheedling him to perdition. But already he knew the test: people walk on the ground, but spirits float ever so slightly above it. This woman's foot soles cast shadows. Staring fascinated at her, he still kept his fists gripped

on a yam stake; and presently, vexed by his stubbornness, she gave up her tempting and vanished into the cassava plot.

Another time, when he was alone in the hut one night the Evil One came again with a pack of spirits, scratching and scraping around the walls and clambering over the roof thatch. He could hear them gambling in the dooryard, slamming down the cards, shouting out the betting terms, and then in sweet whispers through the chinks coaxing him to join them. But as before, he resisted, hugging his shivering white puppy in his arms; till suddenly, with howls of derisive laughter, "Tic! Tac! He slip our hands!" the pack screeched and whizzed away over the dark valley.

" 'He slip our hands!' " Jason screeched again, catching at my sleeve and looking me panic-stricken in the eye. There was no doubt about its having been a real yell that burnt itself into his brain that night.

With experiences like this behind him he had some advice to offer. My polite way of greeting people was all well enough by day, but after dark, and on the Morne roads especially, I ran the risk of giving the spirits power over me. These wanderers, if spoken to, take control. "They make to dazzle you"—it had happened so many pitiful times already—and next day you are found crazed, or drowned, or dead at the bottom of a precipice.

Jason was generous in more ways than in giving advice. He would appear with a plump-skinned tangerine in his pocket, or an avocado in which the seed rattled properly, or a bundle of dried khus-khus roots to scent the linen in my suitcase. One day he popped a "Carib handcuff" over my finger and pulled it tight to show how the aborigines were reputed to have made their prisoners writhe. Pleased with my pantomime of anguish, he gave it to me for a keepsake. As for his ample lore of Roseau and Dominica, he put it quite at my disposal.

Nor was I forgetful of him. We ate spongecakes and custard ice cream in a parlour he was glad to recommend, with an ultra-modest maid in a hat three feet broad to take the order; it was a spotless coop of a place, with an old drop-leaf table glistening darkly and a nosegay of pinks and marigolds like a floral bonfire. When we parted, a shilling or so would go in his pocket: I knew he would make good use of the money, and he took it without a fuss because he knew that he was being helpful. "Good-by!" he would say at the boardinghouse door, "I must go home to play with my bird."

One afternoon I went to see Jason's bird. It was a white long-legged wader, and according to all rules should have been miserable in its box. But when he lay on his belly and beamed in at it through the slats, it turned its head on one side and looked back at him very cheerfully. Twice a day he took a cheesecloth bag to the river and netted minnows to feed it; no doubt now it was hoping for an extra tea party.

At the same time I saw the Apperly house when all the family was at home. It was a model of condensation. Not ten feet square, the one room was divided by a screen that hid the bed. There were good coffee cups on the dresser, plenty of Bible pictures, a shelf of books, a gramophone, and a tiny desk at which Murchison, who was the family scholar, pursued his studies. In fact the place gave me several hints on how to arrange my own house, on my own green isle, when at last I should build it.

Mrs. Apperly—I knew no other name to call her—seated herself on the bed, out of sight, but where she could join in the talk; Murchison sat at his desk, Jason on the doorsill with his bird, and I on the extra chair. The house thus was very well

filled up. We listened to a hymn played on the gramophone, and then to Murchison, who, leaning forward so that the failing daylight would illumine his Bible, read a chapter that bore on a point of faith raised by his mother. Meanwhile, in the courtyard the neighbor women were taking in clothes that had spent the day bleaching on piles of clean stones; the chickens went to roost on the handles of a decrepit wheelbarrow, and put their heads under their wings.

Much though I admired this occasion, in one respect I wished it were different. A psalm full of subtly plain-chosen imagery would have been the thing to hear read in this setting, or one of the Lord's incomparable parables. What we got, however, was neither narrative nor poetry. It was a chapter of theological abstraction. In the face of Scripture of this kind, my brain shuts up like a sea anemone confronted by something that looks to be dangerous rather than nourishing. I tried to appear intelligent and even to understand how the words so earnestly read meant what Murchison interpreted them to mean. But it was no use. My expression was fatuous, my comments were foolish. I fear he suspected me ever after of being a mental lightweight.

All the same it pleased Murchison to have the white stranger for a friend. We had met some days previous at Goodwill, a pebble beach to which Jason had led me for a swim; he had rowed over from town in a boat owned by the two of them, a dugout with keel and stem projecting like a scimitar blade in front and gunwales of built-up planking. In fact, it was a boat typical of the French Caribbees, and I was delighted to have the chance to try my hand in it.

Murchison plied the oars, I the paddle, and Jason, beaming with pleasure to have brought his brother and his American friend together, curled up on the cobblestone ballast in the bottom. Over us Dominica leaned its great rainy mountains; its lee-side sea was undulating and glassy. The world looked hand-

some; but what made it seem a truly mouth-watering foretaste of what my own island was to be—and here Miranda's happy exclamation came echoing from *The Tempest*—was that it had such people in it.

Murchison was blest with style. Like Jason's, his bronze skin was perfect. His features were neat and regular, his manner, urbane, and his speech had that precision and schooled elegance that make an American notice with dismay the sound of his own slurred pronunciation. In speech and looks, as in his knowledge of theology, he gave me ground for envy.

He also excelled Jason in these respects. Jason's English was picturesque and vigorous rather than aristocratic. Murchison deplored its quality, and often told him to cease fraternizing with the waterfront loafers and sailors who taught him their low-class ways.

As for theology, Murchison's studies had persuaded him that the Catholic church in which he had been nurtured was a house of error, and he had saved not only himself but his mother and Jason from it. Mrs. Apperly, I could see, had taken to the new opportunity for godly disputation with deep-bosomed zest; Jason, too, did not regard his conversion as anything but fortunate. But while his elders theologized like good Witnesses, he played with his bird, and then went his way again among those island paths fringed with tufts of giant grass where the spirits wander and rise up, dazzling, if you speak.

Another difference between Murchison and Jason was, that whereas Jason was well-to-do, Murchison was poor. Jason's swimming trunks, for instance, were of lilac-colored silk; he had bought the material and his mother had made them, to wear in the Jubilee diving competitions. Murchison, on the other hand, wore a pair of old work pants slashed off above the knee. When you are nineteen it takes more to be rich than when you are five years younger. Life costs more. True, earning power should

increase in proportion. But it was easy to feel sorry for Murchison, in fact he did so himself, and thus I ordered a job of tailoring from him to give him a little business.

The tailor shop was a hovel and the tailor who sat in its door was a hunchback working the treadle of his sewing machine with one grotesquely outstretched leg. It embarrassed Murchison to take me in. But it was a pleasure to introduce a white client to his fellow apprentices, and his apologies for the room's untidiness were as smooth as those later when he apologized for the poverty of his home. Theirs was a poor home, he told me on that already described occasion, and they poor people, but they did their best to live decently. Such remarks were the sort of thing I never heard from Jason, whose politeness was instinctively more subtle.

Nor did Jason trouble me with problems in social tact. Murchison, older and more bruised by the world, was touchy. I had to be careful to notice him in a crowd. However, he was a far better musician than Jason was, for which reason I proposed that we spend an evening together, playing the mouth organ in the Botanical Gardens and swapping songs. Younger brothers embarrass older brothers at these times of artistic effort: Jason was not to be included. "Where shall we meet?" I asked, for even in Dominica black-and-white social events call for some discretion. But Murchison insisted on stopping for me at my lodgings. It would be no trouble for him at all, he said.

Here he was mistaken. Pride led him rashly to ring the front door bell; whereupon Clarice the maid, who was several degrees darker than himself, told him to step around to the back. He had come early, too; instead of being where I could fly to the rescue, I was at dinner in the garden eating Creole frogs' legs very peacefully.

Out flounced Clarice, her eyes big with outrage. "This tailor of yours thinks that he is great, but he is *NOT* great!" she panted,

pulling the dish out from under my fork and thumping it on the tray.

Napkin in hand I went to see my visitor.

"Such treatment is intolerable!" Murchison began, looking over the back gate. "I am humiliated especially for you: this is an insult more to you than to me! Let me urge that hereafter you notify these lodging-keepers when to expect your guests." He was very angry.

There was nothing to do but to remind him that though the proprietors were colored like himself, their foreign patrons were white and often prejudiced; and that for the peace of the place rules were set up that I could not break even when they were so unpleasantly forced on my attention. It was a poor kind of comfort I fear. Later, when I had had time to grow more huffy I wished I had told him to switch from St. Paul's letters to the Beatitudes for his guidance, but fortunately I did not think of this at the time. No, I had erred in expecting Jason's easy realism of the fellow when I knew very well that he was a proud romantic.

However, it is astonishing how inconsistent people can be in their pride. And since I have found Murchisons on every island—just, thank heaven, as I have found serene characters like Jason—I take pains to report the course of my relationship with these brothers.

Within an hour proud Murchison had turned our friendly evening into a begging party. His back-gate speech, stormily demanding equal status, was followed by the elaborately approached plea that I make him the gift of my good mouth organ. "Or if you have some old worn shirts . . ." he went on, the chance to get something for nothing being too good not to press. He strove his best to push me up on the usual white man's pedestal from which benevolence condescendingly flows. For though it is a fine thing to be an equal and Murchison insisted that he was one,

it is also very cozy to be owed consideration as an inferior, and Murchison wanted this too.

As a dejected superior to a much elated inferior, I gave him the mouth organ for which he had begged. He played it well, better than I, and there was small doubt about his being unable to provide himself with such a luxury. He lacked Jason's resources. I also treated him to a rum or two in each of the upstairs places past which our path to the Gardens seemed circuitously to lead. Drinking, as he reflectively explained while I did the ordering, was contrary to his principles; however, to oblige me, and so on.—And when the plump barmaids came close with their trays, I could sense the sap rising in his lean, well-tailored figure. My shirts I kept for myself, and after that night did not see much of Murchison.

No, when I left Dominíca it was Jason who saw me off. In fact it was owing to his care that I got aboard my ship. Having arrived steerage, it was my destiny to leave on a bauxite freighter; she called at Roseau not on a morning as expected but in the middle of the night.

Jason roused Clarice and Clarice roused me. I looked down in the street from my window and there was the little fellow with earnest face upturned. He had a boat ready and had called a porter to carry the heavy luggage.

Down the empty streets we trudged, the porter behind us with the two suitcases piled on his head, and our shadows wheeling about us on the pavement when we passed a lamp. Jason was in his poorest clothes, they were his freighter-visiting costume. At two in the morning he did not expect to sell anything, but would go out even so and perhaps learn something that would be useful when he had become a seaman.

From the officers' deck I looked down on him again. Somebody had given him a cigarette: he knew the crew already. He knew the town's cheap girls, too, who had swarmed aboard to sell

fruit. They were in and out of the forecastle in a shameless style. It was all very coarse and loose and no place for a judge's son to be, at fourteen, no matter what his color. Poor tike! could he hold to his plans for a good life, I wondered? The small distance by which the best of us keep ahead of the Devil seemed alarmingly small for him in this dismal last scene. Perhaps I was having a glimpse of him as he really was—that is, removed from our tombstone man's edifying influence.

But the siren soon blew. It was time to go ashore. Out of the forecastle the last girls came running in gales of laughter, and lifted their baskets of unsold huge Dominican oranges to their heads again. Jason climbed up to shake hands and say good-by. "Safe passage!" he called as he went down the ladder. "Tomorrow I'm going to caulk a boat."

It was a remark that jounced me back to cheerfulness. He had rounded out the term of our intimacy perfectly in key. I could count on him to slip through the Devil's hands as he had from the beginning. "Tomorrow"—yes, that was Jason all over—"tomorrow I'm going to caulk a boat."

Chapter III.

R. P. LETCHMERE GUPPY IS NOT ONLY an ichthyologist but a son of an ichthyologist to boot. The guppies of our aquariums, in fact—those little fish that transparently reveal the process of their childbearing—were named in his father's honor. But he also is an authority on almost any phase of the natural history of his native Trinidad and Tobago. He has written a book on their butterflies. Their botany is his ice cream. And when he goes to London he immediately calls at the zoo to have a chat with the island birds there in their own island language: I wish I could be present at one of these reunions, to see him planted chubby and pink before the cages, twittering or hooting according to the species while the astounded birds first tip forward to cock their heads and then tip back to answer.

Yes, Mr. Guppy is a gentleman and a scholar. From his Chancellor House tea table he looks out benignly over bustling Port-of-Spain at the hill's foot, to the enamel-blue surface of the Gulf of Paría, which every year grows busier with shipping. Or he putters among his fish tubs and at his writing. It is a life of fruitful tranquillity.

Only the cook upsets him.

"She proves that this hue and cry after slum clearance is all

nonsense!" he will declare, starting forward in his seat. "People who live in the slums don't want to live otherwise. They disdain fresh air and sanitation. Cook has her room up here, private, cool, away from the smells and noises of the city—clean, new, modern —but when dinner is over, off she packs to her own hot hovel on I don't know what back street and lets her advantages go to pot. It puts me out of patience!"

But the cook, after all, was no ichthyologist, nor a gentleman and a scholar. And since I belong to the younger generation, noted for examining the utterances of its elders to find flaws if possible, I examined Mr. Guppy's views to see if the cook's contrary ones might not boast some merit.*

Privacy was perhaps not what the cook wanted, at 9 P.M. Why should she? The white guests at Chancellor House, drinking the tea she made, gobbling her scones, and reaching enthusiastically for second or third slices of her guava-jelly roll, never gave a thought to the author of these good things. They treated her to all the privacy she had need of, for the day. At night she wanted to talk babies and salvation with somebody who thought about them as she did. On the Hill, babies were important, of course, but they were sure to be white and all look alike; whereas the natal events on her own street were worthy of the shrewdest prophecy and speculation. As for their souls' welfare, the Hill gentry regarded themselves as saved per se; the subject had no further interest. Instead, they talked about fish not even fit to eat, European politics, the view, and other such stupidness.

I belong on the side of the ichthyologists, myself. I was brought up to be independent of other people for my fun. Fish are company enough much of the time. However, some human sociability is essential, and for a really nourishing and refreshing draught of it, give me plain poor people for my company.

* There are those among the recently weaned, I notice, who are so absurd as to apply to my views a scrutiny of this kind.

The art of leaning out of the window is one I studied while completing my education in New York: tenement friends, there, were certainly very expert at it, they could do it for hours at a time. They fetched pillows and put their elbows on them and their faces between their hands. This is one of the good positions. The chief thing to learn, however, as in formal religion, is not the ceremonial postures, but to appreciate the small rewards you get for your pains. A fat lady blowing her nose, the postman coming along—these are the things you must learn to find worth while.

In Dominíca the accomplishment proved of value. Tropical hotels are usually in gardens, but in Roseau by great good luck my window opened into a maze of poor folks' houses. Thus when I was not out with one of the Apperly brothers I was busy leaning.

It was a Syrian family that lived over the way. Though they were immigrants to Dominíca, they had already learned to eat green coconuts for breakfast. No table needed to be spread: the vendor at the gate would hack the nuts open with a practiced cutlass, and the brass-mannered maid-of-all-work would carry them in. Drained of their coconut water—this was breakfast's first course—they were fetched back to be split in two for the second, of still jellylike meat.

Then the boys of the family would take their baths. The problem was to slip past that tease, the maid, without her snatching off the towels that they had tied around their middles. It was a comedy that reminded me of the leaning I'd done on Saturday on Roseau's upper bridge: from among the bathers below a couple of "golden girls" had waved up kisses and arched their bodies to let me enjoy what they were enjoying so much themselves, a forbidden public nakedness—with which salutation the laughter that came up was as hearty and free as that of the Syrians' black maid now, when the boys' rude kicks at her found their mark.

Beside the Syrians' gate was a row of shanties. In the second of these lived a cobbler; he would stretch his feet out of the door for coolness, hammer away, and curl his lips forward in loud-voiced song. One afternoon, leaning back between his legs a friend sat peaceably with a sleepy small girl in his arms; on the neighboring step sat a young mother making baby clothes for her next; on the curb was an older woman, ironing vigorously on a low table set across the gutter. In fact it was a harmonious, Creole-jabbering, close-hearted group; I liked each member of it.

When the "Lonely Boy" soft-drink cart came by and everybody had a dim ha'penny glass of something, they lifted their glasses and nodded to me because they knew I'd be pleased. In Roseau I had an easy reputation. And it did please me; inwardly I elected the whole batch of them to the citizenry of my island. Certainly, if I had been the Chancellor House cook I should have preferred their company of an evening to solitude in my cool and smell-less Hill hermitage.

· COCONUT · VENDOR ·

The Dominícans, true enough, share the cook's views and put them into practice. On a roomy island with uplands not only uninhabited but in part unexplored, they crowd themselves together in coast towns for sociability's sake. They are quite ready to walk miles a day to and from their gardens on the airy heights. Who wants to live in a cassava patch? Town is the place for human beings.

There are islands in the West Indies, however, where this free-

dom of choice is not responsible for crowded living. *Vivimos como cuatro en un zapato,* say the Puerto Ricans, who do not altogether like it: "We live four in one shoe." There are over 500 of them, as a matter of statistics, to each square mile; and since most of each mile in an agricultural country must be used for agriculture, these five hundred people see a good deal of each other on the little corner of it that is left for them to live in.

But Puerto Rico is not the West Indies' sole example of a crowded populace, nor is it the most extreme. Carriacou, not yet discovered by the sociologists, supports a peasant population of 700 to the mile; these stoics subsist, too, without any source of fresh water except as they catch it in rainstorms and store it away in cisterns. As for Barbados, that island's uncomfortable boast is 1,100 inhabitants per mile: how in the name of Euclid can so little ground grow enough sugar to support so many people?

In such places the delights of sociability are not optional, as with the Dominícans or the Chancellor House cook. They are obligatory. The air incessantly rustles with the noise of conversation. Every country road tends to become a street.

But Barbados's crowded living is an old thing. The island has had time long since to adjust itself to life four in one shoe. Major George Washington, who brought his ailing brother to Barbados for his health, marveled at its populousness in 1752. In its long prime the island was the money-maker, the darling, the peerless one among British colonies. Its exquisitely quiet country churchyards, its gracious old mansions in aristocratically spacious lawns, give the island a kind of beauty that not one other in the Antilles can duplicate. And with these surviving graces comes the still comforting aroma of gilt-edged securities, to which charms against fate the island owes much of its continuing stability.

But dividends from the outside world, gingerly dispensed for goods and services, cannot forever span the gap between island

earnings and the needs of a bottled-up but still growing populace. Bridgetown, where the idlers most gather, is not altogether a pleasant place for a white visitor. The streets echo with importunities. When a tenacious pander followed me indoors while I had my hair cut, to continue his whispering whenever the barber's back was turned, it made me itch. "Enormous populations, if they be beggars, are disgusting, like moving cheese—the more the worse," said Emerson: it is an itchy dictum. For what this pest illustrated was the lengths to which people must go, in crowded places, to earn their keep.

In Carriacou money is far scarcer and arable land not much more abundant per capita than in Barbados. The island nevertheless seems more happy. Limes and Marie Galante cotton are the only sources of its revenue, if you except the labor some Carriacouans do in Venezuela and Cayenne (they return with their wages romantically in gold dust). But the land is owned almost wholly by the people who work it. What little revenue it does produce goes directly into the pockets of their own much patched jeans.

Too poor to support a cinema, they are mercifully spared a comparison of their lives with those lived in the wonderland of Hollywood. It does not occur to them to miss champagne at breakfast. In fact white colonials, always expensive for colored natives to ape, do not exist in their community. The clergy come from elsewhere, true enough, like Gouyave's or like those white gods that freakish winds used sometimes to bring to the New World from European shipwrecks in pre-Columbian days. But the habits of these outsiders are necessarily frugal, and their color singularity, as in the case of the old shipwrecked gods, no doubt gives them a special spiritual value.

Thus, in a healthful climate and amid seas well supplied with fish, the islanders live on as near one plane of social equality as conveniently can be found. Instead of some dwelling in man-

sions, some in hovels, every house is modest. Lived in by their owners, most of them are well kept. "Slum clearance" has come as a natural process since the old days of the sugar estates; the results are rather heartening.

Where revenue is small and the land your own, you grow as much of your food as you can to avoid sending money elsewhere for it. The automatic result is a garden community of a kind. To prowl Lesterres's roadlike streets, for example, winding among mixed tracts of field and garden and orchard, with nets drying on the palmy seabeach below and no super-landlord anywhere in sight, is an experience not un-Arcadian.

Or such a poor town as Mount Tryall might please even Mr. Guppy, though no alley in the back quarters of Port-of-Spain could show dwellings more rudimentary. Certainly he would find the place well aired: its trees are pollarded to the point of butchery to provide fodder for the cattle; besides, it is perched on a windy ridge with the glittering expanse of Atlantic and Caribbean far below, and a long green-brown mantle of cotton fields draped over the hill's descending folds. Nor are the huts the tottering kind, to suggest that their occupants devote the day to reading movie magazines and wishing life were grander. Even a mud house can look self-respecting, and this the Mount Tryall houses do. In them, moreover, no beggars live—for which reason, if I were to settle in a crowded place, a peasant-owned island like Carriacou would be the one for me.

But crowds can be a nuisance as I saw very plainly in Carriacou when Elfrida, who milked the cow at the back door morning and evening, offered to teach me some of the old French Creole songs.—Not at the house, she insisted, because she would be laughed at. We went across the street into the shade of a tamarind growing by the sea.

This was out of the frying pan and no mistake. In three minutes Elfrida was hurling rocks to keep her friends at a respectful dis-

tance—she was a natural-mannered country girl. But defense was vain. There were not half enough rocks at hand to maim the tormenters who came swarming. No, Elfrida broke down. Overwhelmed with indignation and embarrassment she sat all in a huddle. "I wonder the gentleman don't ax to take a snap of you, you look so ugly," tittered one onlooker and got his face slapped. There was a big laugh.

Perhaps it was because I had footed the hill roads and coasts all day and was dog-tired, or perhaps it was my soul's kinship with Emerson and Mr. Guppy—something suddenly made it imperative to bolt. I had to get away from these maggots. They were making me itch. Slam went the door behind me when I shut out the too teeming world. And then most aggravating of all was to perceive that the one ditty I had been quick enough to jot was a jewel—a conjuration against the Evil Eye's turning a gardener's greens to weeds. Some day, armed with more social patience, I shall go back to Carriacou and wheedle Elfrida to resume the lesson.

In Puerto Rico, where land is plentiful according to the Barbadian scale and the Carriacouans would find cash incredibly abundant, these blessings are not very well distributed. But saying this does not settle the question of what to do next. The problem of distribution is a puzzler when those to whom you make wealth available, instead of being individually enriched by it, are only made more numerous.

The benefits the Puerto Ricans have gained from their connection with Uncle Sam are unfortunately of just this nature. A vast segment of that reproachful people would yet slumber in

limbo if our blundering old codger had not made them economic possibilities. The island's crowding, unlike Barbados's, is recent. Nor has the crush led to a modest standard of desires as in Carriacou, though God knows the Puerto Ricans display fortitude of the most sinewy kind in doing without what we should call necessities. Money they must have. It is the basis of life. There are always people in sight who do have plenty of it, and to habits of wealth these poor Latins are fatally susceptible. At cockfights and the races it is not sporting to bet according to your purse; the cinema, motor travel, and clothes of fashionable cut are indispensable. Home, however, as a place on which it is a pleasure to lavish money and care is not much of a hobby. If sacrifices must be made there are already so many babies to make them for that mere real estate is subject to neglect. At any rate Puerto Rico's city poor, for some reason or other, live in slums fit to stop a visitor in his tracks.

The island has many fine sights to show, model housing schemes included in the number. The fortifications of San Juan are among the world's most impressively tremendous: here for once is a Spanish seaport which in the filibusters' swashbuckling seventeenth century was never ravished. The panorama from the coleus-banked road above Cayey is like Moses's glimpse of the Promised Land. The Arecibo Valley with its vine-draped cliffs reflected in the river, and feathery groves of giant canes, is to my mind the handsomest in the Antilles: the very view of it from the sea, miles distant, suggests a gateway to the fabulous. As for the endless hard-surface highways tunneling between scarlet-flowered flamboyant trees, here is something genuinely unique to this lucky island. But if the extraordinary is to be included with the beautiful, the city slums also deserve remark.

In San Juan I prowled neighborhoods of teeming shanties built in the tidal swamps, where children grow up playing on rickety plank runways, and yesterday's offal drifts back and forth beneath

them, mingled with today's. The top of the beach at Arecibo, a no man's land too unsafe in a storm for commercial building, has been crammed with teetering hovels, streetless and without plumbing as usual; in fact the beach below is not only playground but a mile-long latrine. The hill quarters by Ponce's picturesque old aqueduct are studies in scrap-bag architecture, heaped, jumbled, jammed together, and overrun, believe me, with naked babies.

Such sights bring the vats of indignation to the seething point; however, as when Mr. Guppy spoke his piece, it is well to take the cook's views into consideration before letting the vats boil over. The slums of Puerto Rico have this point of superiority when compared with those of Barbados or New York—that they are built by the people who live in them. Like shantytowns anywhere, these dumps reflect a spirit of independence and self-help that is healthy even though they themselves are not.

On land (or in shallow water) too precarious to lure capital investment the poor take squatters' privilege. Slowly collecting ragtags of lumber, packing cases, and bits of tin, they build something as near the heart's desire as circumstances seem to warrant. The process is laborious—I have held a bit of crating in place myself while a crooked nail was being driven—but it is far faster and more automatic than benevolent housing schemes engineered from above. And if some of the builders spend as much on the horses on one unlucky Sunday as they do on home sweet home in a year and call the balance even, they think differently from me, but this does not necessarily mean that they are depraved or daffy.

Another point that I, a Northerner, must be cautious to remember is that West Indians who live six to a room are very little in it. Theirs is an outdoor existence in the tropics. Shelter is not so needful nor so dear to them as to me and mine in Minnesota. Sleeping, too, poses less of a problem than a Northerner would

expect. Four children in a bed is not out of the question when covers are not required: two heads go at the foot of the bed, two at the head, that's that. I have seen it done. Of course it must be tiresome to wake and find little sister's big toe screwed in your ear, but the thing to do is to unscrew it and go back to sleep.

As for social pleasures, these city slums provide a perpetual abundance. There is always somebody ready for a crap game or to talk babies and novenas. Music thrives in a vulgar soil. I recall a back-street concert in Mayagüez, for instance, of a quality rare in quarters of greater cultural advantage.

Ten men were crowded in the little room, they had three guitars among them. Overhead a dim lamp flared; the curl of their glossy hair reflected its gleam, or a bronze brow, or a moist thrust-out lower lip, or the curves and strings of the instruments they played.

Between pieces there was laughter and joking. Each singer wished to pass off his just finished effort as a trifle not worthy of the applause given it. But at the first note of the next song—what a change! Some heads were bowed. Others were lifted back, eyes closed. It was like a company of masks and statues.

Meanwhile the artist, sitting on the out-edge of his chair, struck his instrument, and delivered his heart into our hands. He was inspired—oracular. Phrases begun as guttural snarls or falsetto whimpers ended full-throated, coppery, and triumphant. Others, twisting up in arabesques loudly melancholy, sank away again in husky whispers. Then would come a stanza coldly expressionless that stood my hair on end.

This was a serious occasion. But nowhere better than in a setting like it, with rude girls pushing and the table wet with spilled liquor, do the rollicking songs start up. Their humor sets the children in the windows to grinning and tittering, hands clap, and the refrain, bawled out a hundred times, is every time bawled

with more abandon. It is a soul exercise of a kind that stretches the soul muscles to delicious elasticity.

The paradoxical truth is that slum life boasts its own positive joys and comforts. My father had a fishing coat that my mother several times threw away; but he would fetch it back again from the ash can and give it a shake: its spots were dear to him, and when he caught a fish he could wipe his hands without making the old coat smell one jot fishier. Men love old clothes because they feel free in them. Some people love the slums for a like reason, the Chancellor House cook among the number.

In fact there is something of the slums in all of us that needs intercourse with the gutter now and then. Or if you prefer the classic terms, let me say an earthiness that needs reunion with the earth. The great works of art, the Shakespeare plays, the Bibles, have room and fearlessness to do this. They feed not only the ethereal sweetness that is in us but our necessary ordures. People like Jason Apperly who sink some of their roots in a rowdy water-front society—that is, in the dirt—have perhaps as good a chance at good growth as the Murchisons who turn upside down and plant themselves in the windy skies of speculative theology. Murchison's boughs, as a matter of fact, showed a disappointing tendency to scrape the ground.

On my island there will be no slums, however. I am positive about that. My town will be a flowerier Gouyave or a more compact Lesterres. Like Mr. Guppy I belong neither on the peaks nor in the mud—ours is a middle zone. For food ethereal, give me FitzGerald's unaspiring letters; for Antaean coupling with crude Mother Earth, a garden, not too large. But when I lean on my trowel and remember the crowded places of the isles, sometimes I wonder if mine well can do without one. Should my island, the question is, be bowdlerized?

Chapter IV.

ANYONE WHO SPEAKS ENGLISH AND HAS a fondness for horses and cup custards is likely to enjoy Cuba.

To be good, cup custards must be smooth. The secrets of achieving this the Cuban cooks perfectly know, they make them every day. In fact, in the broad realm of the cooking of eggs Cuba inherits the full grandeur of Hispanic tradition. Shirred eggs *malagueña*, at the old Ambos Mundos in Havana, are an experience to be remembered with no halfhearted thankfulness.

As for horses, the only kind I know how to manage at present are those under a drafting table; still this does not prevent my admiring the flesh and blood kind that neigh and switch their tails. Unsaddled, they look noble and mythological; on which sort of creature in my own free island life, God help me to gallop into the brine each morning for a jointly-relished bath! For nothing seems more enviable to me or more truly lordly than the kind of riding, neither "professional" nor fancy, that is as effortless as breathing—such, for instance, as you see everywhere in Santa Clara or Camagüey provinces in Cuba, over the broad grasslands and down the cane-field lanes.

Of English lessons, too, it is a pleasure to speak. They give me opportunity to brag of an uncle who, with the unlikely talisman of a doctor's thesis on *French Agglutinations in "de-"* tucked in

his vest, went to Latin America and made a fortune. First, however, this philologist wanted some practical Spanish, and his method of acquiring it in a hurry was to go to Madrid and give English lessons. Pupils, as I have often heard him say, teach you so much. The blunders they make reveal where their language differs from yours in idiom—on which differences, in Madrid, he was quick to seize, and so left Old Spain soon for the New, jabbering Spanish like a born Iberian.

This method of learning another language has always seemed beautiful to me. Its simplicity and its perversity give it a double charm. Moreover, when you teach other people your language they are the ones to make jackasses of themselves, not you. Yours is the part of charity, dignity, and repose.

All the same, my approach to the foreign languages has always been the groveling kind. Unlike my uncle I am not a linguist born, and so until I got to Cuba I writhed and agonized and was ridden by some teacher or other who knew a great deal more than I did about the subject in hand. It was a career of mortification. Even in Cuba, at first, my panic upon hearing the clickety-clack of talk in the streets sent me crawling to a tutor. Could she, would she, help me to untie the knot of bashfulness at the root of my tongue and take the wax out of my baffled ears?

Poor woman, she did her best. It was all very painful. Even now I see the grille on her stair, and *Please ring the bell* written in English under the Spanish phrase, as if—phooey!—I couldn't read the latter.

Our efforts were not without fruit. Everybody in Havana speaks English, people say, though this is by no means true: that teeming city can blot up a horde of tourists without changing its complexion. I, for one Havanese, spoke Spanish, bewildering the waiters with pippy-voiced requests for *la sal* or *el vinagre*, and stepping up to the barber with an anxiously rehearsed speech meaning "Please cut my hair."

In that barbershop scene I must have looked a lamb come to the shearing, or perhaps in my attempt to sound offhand I said "Please cut my horses," the words for "horse" and "hair" being much alike. At any rate the barber, who was learning English in a night class, implored me to address him in that language. He wanted the practice. And with a bow he produced a newspaper published by his fellow students, for me to examine while I had my hair (or horses) cut.

The joke column, written all in English by these hard-working learners, was indeed very funny. As my uncle says, it is the mistakes people make in using your language that reveal the structure of theirs. However, I had no time to reflect upon such clues, I was too busy giving the barber the lesson he craved. In class, as he had managed to grumble, they tended to discuss the pencil, the inkwell, and the pen, whereas what he yearned for was English to help him in the barber business.

This I labored to supply. When next an American had his horses cut in that white tile cave, "Wet or dry?" my student inquired at the end of the process, brushing him off with a happy flourish.

If in this episode I began to sense that English was a sort of currency in Cuba, to be generous with which could be a kindness, I guessed it all the more clearly when I got into the provincial cities, Matanzas for one.

Matanzas is a big, out-of-hand seaport that sprawls around a bay and pushes up a hill or two. It has a sleepy cathedral in its middle, and on the road to La Playa a neighborhood of villas, gray, classic, and columnar, like Pompeii before the eruption. There are caves near by for people not yet sick of caves. Best of all, above it looms a breezy ridge where the casino maintains a

shrine of religious pilgrimage, the Cuban Monserrate. This is a spot worth visiting, and a great many people go there without need of advice from me, to solicit miracles of the Virgin and to eat ice cream.

Eastward from the Monserrate the hill drops away toward the harbor, with the city in its lap: the various-tinted plaster facets of the houses gleam in the strong sunshine, the two rivers glint, and sounds of bells rise from the belfries that protrude from among the brown tile roofs. The other way, behind the ridge, lies the Vale of Yumurí, a bowl among tawny hills, floored with the fresh green of sugar cane and dotted with gray-boled palms.

Nor is the ridge top one of those usual hills in the tropics, where you arrive in a flood of perspiration only to find the view concealed by the bushes. Its grass is as smooth as the casino's billiard tables down in the city, and on the benches well-pruned laurel trees cast their shade. It would be hard to imagine a more pleasing site for an English lesson, which was what it was used for on the day of my visit.

On the way up I had had a Spanish lesson of a kind. Down the road toward me whistled a car containing a young islander and his girl; and since their speed was such that the next hairpin bend could not be negotiated, they shot through a barbed-wire fence instead and smash-bang on into the brambles. Why they did not go off one of the several near-by cliffs I cannot say. No, these sweethearts of the Jazz Age lit right side up, the girl leaning back in a nerveless style and the boy springing out instantly to give the radiator several smart and angry slaps. What he told his car while it cowered there on the hillside was intended to teach it never to do such a thing again.

Having noted the idioms employed and that nobody was killed or injured, I plodded on shrineward and heavenward and soon was giving the English lesson of which I have already spoken.

My student was a Cuban with his coat over one arm and his

straw hat on the back of his head. He was a mathematician by intention but a rural school teacher temporarily, for the reason that all schools of higher (or even high school) learning on the island had been closed for several years. Before he could go on with his calculus and theory of real numbers he was having to mark time like so many others of his stalled generation.

But marking time is impossible for some people. This chap, while Havana University stood locked up to humble its political pride, would toil up to the Monserrate when his school was out and occasionally find sight-seeing Americans who were willing to help him with his English. Perhaps a catch-as-catch-can education has a special virtue in it: certainly my student showed a zeal I do not remember in the classrooms of my own college days.

Not to be outdone in ardor, I gave him what help I could, perched there above some of earth's most celebrated landscapes. With soul recently seared by the Havana Spanish lessons, I was in a mood to teach. Oh, the bliss of being on top again! Nor was I anything but patient, admiring, and distinct of utterance. The recent date of my tutoring also saw to that. There was not a moment's relaxation until the sun was ready to set, at which time we arose and, dusting off the seats of our pants, trudged down into the sloping streets of the city.

But even on such laborious occasions as this, in Cuba, I would sometimes think with discouragement how remote is the possibility of achieving mutual understanding when not only terms are dissimilar but the things they represent. Even such a quite simple word as "door" can bring different images to people of different countries.

Certainly an American in Cuba soon observes that the house doors are of an unfamiliar bigness. When a Cuban dies, it would seem that he doesn't want his pallbearers to bark their knuckles on the way out; in fact the door is built large enough to admit a hearse. Its two huge leaves, studded with iron stars, are seldom

unclosed. Doors cut within these doors do for the comings and goings of every day. To bid one open, you thump a knocker cast in the form of a dangling hand with a ball in its fingers, and then step through. A bridal party enters or the trash is fetched out, all at this same portal: it is front door, back door, and often garage door too; and when a Cuban tot learns the word, this is the formidable institution it henceforth will bring to mind.

Through such a door my grateful student ushered his teacher; and as he turned the key he made a beautiful little speech, putting the premises unconditionally at my disposal. Here was my Matanzas home.

It seemed delightful to acquire a house with a patio in it full of roses in return for an afternoon of amateur pedagogy. I looked about with real interest. But again terms were misleading. My Matanzas home was not a "house" in the Minnesota sense. Rather, it was a series of cool masonry caves arching loftily one into the other, all facing the gay small garden, paved with glistening tile, and with a spiral staircase corkscrewing its way through the dining room ceiling into my host's wizardlike study above.

These arrangements I liked immediately, and also my host's mother, a merry, gray, wrenlike lady. The cook, too, pleased. She was a graceful colored girl with gold hoops in her ears, to whom it was a rapture to hear the young master conversing in the foreign gibberish.

We had coffee in the patio, and I was shown a letter from another American who had given this student a boost toward better English. "She says she has been visiting some shut-ins," he pointed out, adding, "People in jail, I presume?"

I elucidated. It was an expression a Cuban might readily mistranslate. "Now we shall have a Spanish lesson!" he cried, fresh as a daisy, and asked in his own language what I had enjoyed most during my stay in Cuba.

After the question had been repeated a couple of times I caught

it, and for want of another inspiration, though not without some honesty, replied, "The cup custards," which he thought very whimsical. I had not yet got into Santa Clara or Camagüey provinces to see the riding there or I might have said that. But that, too, he probably would have found droll. Unlike help in English, a new gift counted as a blessing, the old gifts of good custards or of effortless riding are things the Cubans take for granted.

Traveling down to the south coast a few days later to Santísima Trinidad, I resolved to give more English lessons. But there was no ring of purpose in this. I was being facetious to avoid being anxious. Going down to that neglected city, cut off even from the Cuban world by its own jealous range of mountains, was like throwing myself out of an upstairs window: I hoped to land in comfort but there was a good chance I might not. How primitive a place should I find? And how difficult, with my scanty Spanish, was it going to be to settle myself in it?

For these times of dread Fate saves some of her pleasantest surprises. Not only did I give English lessons in Trinidad, but these

led on to musical parties at which my soulful *señoritas* and their English teacher, with bosoms aheave and refreshments afterward, swapped Bach and Albéniz, Händel and Lecuona pieces on a stately piano whose keyboard the climate had so browned that it looked like a long slab of gingercake, entirely without the usual landmarks of black and white. When during one of these soirées, I looked around me at the patio with the thick old pear tree in it and the chaperoning aunts more agog than anybody over the fun we were having, it seemed like one of the occasions I was planning for my own island's high jinks.

Even the ride in to Trinidad proved memorable. Though I had not realized it until I began working my way from city to city down Cuba's long backbone, the island is an oceanic extension of Texas, with palms. For the most part it is level excellent farm land. Such landscapes I much enjoy. But in time a traveler craves novelty, and thus when we turned from the rolling plains of Santa Clara into the Trinidad mountains my half-shut eyes popped wide awake, to peer into the valleys through which the train came hooting.

By the time we had reached Yznaga the valleys had broadened: here were both kinds of Cuban beauty, untamed mountain and fruitful plain. On a knoll in the village an antique tower, of seven tiers of arches, mysteriously beetled; another way, under the horizontal boughs of enormous trees, was a white-walled, tile-roofed, spread-out ranch headquarters. Ox teams strained down the converging roads and horsemen came riding in, in Wild West whirls of dust—sombreros curling, square-tailed pleated shirts worn outside the riding breeches, *machetes* dangling in leather scabbards, and boots stitched in florid patterns, well equipped with spurs. At Yznaga I saw Cuban horsemanship at its most picturesque.

Trinidad came soon after, at dusk. Against the darkening hill of La Vigía there was a sudden glimpse of church gables and pink

campaniles; then with a jolt the train stopped in what in Spanish days had been the barracks. And very soon, as if dropped into the middle of a comic-opera performance, I was dining at the Canadá on eggs *ranchera* with a glass of claret and cracked ice in the old-time Caribbean style.

Meals at the Canadá were always theatrical. But was I an onlooker or an actor? The front of the establishment rolled up like a roll-top desk, and what went on in the street was certainly amusing. There were the horsemen clattering over the cobbles, princely and debonair; also droop-necked pack trains, donkeys and their tattered drivers, or an oxcart drawn up to unload the crooked wood that sent such a smoke from our kitchen into the grimy patio. Beggars and vendors of lottery tickets leaned in to chant their chorus of needs and numbers, while the band played in the plaza opposite and the townspeople strolled and strolled.

Then again it seemed that the action was indoors and that the passers-by who always stopped for a look were the audience.

A troop of cowboys, very bashful, would slowly fold their legs into place at table, awed by the glitter of the metropolis and the gorgeousness of the tooth-paste advertising that filled the walls. The traveling men in white suits ironed to look like oilcloth conversed in Latin frenzy, pointing quivering fingers in witness to heaven and strewing the tables and floor copiously with bread crumbs. Curro, the cross-eyed Andalusian valet, tore in and out with his shirt-tail flying, while Quico the regular waiter bowed his way around some party dinner table with a platter of rice and chicken aglisten with pimento slices.

There was the judge in his solemn blue spectacles, and his plump and languorous-eyed wife. There was the bootblack who sang while he snapped his cloths by the door, and Señor Rafael Bergansa, supple-waisted and fashionable, who would make a dash for the lopsided piano and comb loud, glib, joyful music from it, pulling recklessly at the lever that made cymbals clash in time

with the bass. At his desk sat our proprietor, glasses well down on nose, pinching the breasts of the chickens brought in for sale to learn if they were fat, which set the modest hens to thrashing their wings. And of course here was the American foreigner, eating a custard and over it helping young Luis de Zayas Font with his English.

My friend Luis was the proprietor's nephew. Some day he will inherit the business, and with this future before him, a city absurdly picturesque about him, and a mountain hinterland well supplied with picnic dells for a second zone, he wisely wishes to prepare himself for the *americanos* who may suddenly rush in. Thanks to his kindness I was soon introduced into salons of neglected old-time Cuban grandeur, and climbed rickety stairs into several old towers. As well as he could, too, he told me stories of the place, of misers and fantastic spendthrifts, of miraculous crosses and pirate crimes. Cortez sailed to the conquest of Mexico after recruiting in Trinidad what were to prove some of his most famous aids. The city was founded a century before Jamestown, and thus has had time to accrete a fund of anecdote.

Thanks to Luis, too, of course, I was launched as an English teacher with a class of five. On my first morning in town I met the group's paid instructor, a roly-poly Cuban who was an inventor on the side. He had invented a typewriter ribbon that was going to be a godsend to the world, and for a specimen of what it could do he rattled off his name and address: "Medardo Marrero, On the Post Office, Trinidad." I was much impressed. This was followed by an invitation to return and meet the class, and so give the young ladies especially, ha, ha, ha!, a chance to hear the speech of a real English-speaking man.

To have my facetious resolve so promptly possible of fulfillment was a joke too good to spoil. Ergo, at ten o'clock the session started.

Imagine the paralysis among the students, brought to this en-

counter without a word of warning. The young ladies were mute, the young gentlemen could fetch out nothing but blurts, while Señor Marrero stormed up and down because they refused to illustrate the proficiency he had claimed to have taught them.

But animal spirits and curiosity soon revived. When the conversation, established on the familiar rocks of the pencil, the inkwell, and the pen, turned to airplane travel, Cuban music, or Minnesota winters, everybody found something to ask or tell; the give and take, half Spanish, half English, became almost too deafeningly animated. Meanwhile the Marrero family, one head over another like targets at a fair, gazed in through a partly open inner door; and on the street-door sill a trio of little darky girls paused to sit and listen.

However, I had not come to Cuba to teach English, really. That first morning when I took over Señor Marrero's duties I felt most accommodating. But teaching people who are greedy to learn and who regard your unexpected descent from nowhere with almost the astonishment and interest that Columbus roused in his day, has its fascination. Like playing poker or eating salted peanuts, it lures a man on.

I found my evenings being given over to preparations for the morrow—to trying to devise exercises that were not merely useful but marked by some contemporaneity and zip. And in the mornings I found myself brushing the regular teacher aside in a way that must sometimes have approached the brusque. Poor man! from noisy participation he passed to blowing smoke rings and rocking in a rocking chair and then, practically an outcast, to spending the time next door "on the post office."

From these lively sessions my path led on into musicales and mountain drives and I felt very happy. "Now we shall get ready!" the chauffeur would exclaim jovially after we had been ushered into the back seat; burrowing under the front, he would fetch out an old-time hand pump to harden up the tires. The Trinidad

streets are paved with cobbles, as we rode over them each of us looked like twins. But the country roads were smoother, toward Sancti Spíritus, that hoary *villa*, or the Río Caña with its cascades and bamboos.

Frequent repairs made it necessary to take a mechanic with us. He was a merry fellow in a plum-colored suit; and though his straw hat looked neat enough from the front, the back of it had been eaten away by a goat one day when he was at a funeral. *Chico* Luis, at the story, fell forward in a helpless fit of laughter.

And so away to the more sophisticated main-line world again, to Camagüey and its saddlery shops, Holguín and eggs *madrileña*, and to Santiago de Cuba with its narrow streets and broad, solemn doors. Cuba was too big an island for me to want for mine, but the memory of it haunts me as sharply as if it had been a little one: I hear again the loud flute octaves in lamp-lit plazas, while the strollers gesticulate and gabble their Spanish, and sad-voiced hawkers come and go. I smell again the good smell of brown saddle leather and taste the good taste of a Cuban custard.

For Spain's arts still govern in her Antillean last-lost colonies. The old music, new-blended with the African, still pierces the heart with its strange monotonies; the old architecture, sprouting in new forms, brings to the cities an ornate and courtly charm. Climbing the hill streets of Trinidad or Matanzas the Passion Week pageantry with its bleeding Saviours, trumpet shrieks, and lurching forests of lighted candles, rekindles the dark splendor of Spain's Catholicism in the islands. And new again in Cuba, but familiar and terrific, the sins and enthusiasms of Spanish politics break out in jets of aspiring patriotism, and in graft and tyranny.

As for my English lessons, they did not change the island much—less in fact than it has been anglicized by American "big business." Nor did I learn much Spanish while I was at them. However, they made an alien place homelike for the stranger:

I think affectionately of the big Cuban doors because not a few of them proved friendly.

Of the schools that gave me the creeps then, with their blind windows and padlock-gagged entrances, I think kindly too, though they have been reopened since under the eye of the military. Mum in those days, they gave me my chance to talk. When I left Cuba I left not only pupils but friends behind—the lessons in fact continue by correspondence.

Chapter V.

NOT FORGETTING TO WEAR A HAT, I went to synagogue on Saturday. The cupboard doors were laid back heavily on their silver hinges, the scrolls of the Law were revealed, crowned nobly with silver crowns; and the cantor, dreamy and lost in devotion, filled the solemn old room with chanted Hebrew.

Overhead the brass chandeliers reflected a blue light from the gallery lunettes in their tier on tier of clustered hurricane glasses. The floor under foot was sanded with coral dust. And in the stout old mahogany pews about me sat the merchants of Curaçao, industriously chatting.

To psalms intoned Sabbath after Sabbath since King David's time there is no longer much necessity to listen, perhaps; however, I listened, and once in a great while some not wholly unfamiliar word—*shalom*, say, for "peace"—would dart from the torrent of sonorous gibberish to lodge in my pleased brain. I refused the loan of a prayer shawl, but ever after on the narrow streets of the Punda quarter the city Jews bowed to me when our ways passed.

Sunday, the next day, I went to the state church. It was evening; the sentries at the tunnel under the palace saluted when the Dutch officials came gliding into the courtyard in their sleek motorcars; the church's high steps and high windows were cheerfully alight.

Inside, the pastor climbed to a pulpit pasted like a baroque swallows' nest against the wall. When he called the hymn and we Dutchmen broke into the substantial harmonies of a Protestant chorale it was a moment of grandeur.

As for the sermon, I listened to it with all my ears. Dutch looks a puzzle in print, but spoken earnestly from a pulpit it sounds much like what it means, or so I was pleased to imagine. Since I was a male, respectably dressed though an unknown, I was seated with the petty officials in the box pews at the pastor's left. All faces, like mine, were upturned in studious attention; all necks, at our happy task of singing, grew cherry red: the housewifely bosoms of the ladies in the square center of the room inflated and deflated in the same religious enterprise.

Only the governor's pew was vacant. After the last amen, thus, when we came out into the warm gloom again, it was good to note that one sole window was all that was lighted in the palace—at the extreme end of the building, as if His Excellency were feeling ashamed of himself. But the sentries saluted the lesser officialdom very smartly, and ever afterward on Wilhelminaplein or Queen Emma Bridge these grave bigwigs bowed when we chanced to meet.

Monday was All Saints' Day so I went to Mass. Whether all Catholic choirs in Curaçao are as angelic as that which sings in the cathedral in Otrabanda I wish I could report. However, I did not neglect to wait, that day, to see what these angel voices might look like in the flesh: down the loft stairs they came tumbling at last, clerks and stevedores and taxi drivers—colored boys in well-starched suits of holiday white, all very ready for the holiday fun now before them. The choirmaster, whom I stole up to see, was angelic enough. Pillbox cap on head, he sat all alone under the low arch of the roof, serenely reading his breviary.

The old priest I never saw again, my bowing list was not lengthened by even one name thanks to that days' churchgoing. For

there is nothing exclusive about Catholicism in Curaçao. Strange faces were as much to be expected as familiar ones in that big congregation. This was the people's church, unblushingly popular: Mass was said in Latin, of course, but the sermon was preached and notices were read in Papiamento, the island's low-brow vernacular.

The study of language is one of those hobbies for which I wish I had more time. Why wasn't I born twins, to let half of me put in some real licks on philology? But being the one-brained amateur that I am and the repose of the island life being not yet mine to use, this branch of knowledge finds me shining in it as ineffectually as in all the others. Current usage in my mother tongue, in fact, often brings me to a nonplus. "English—it is a speech very difficult!" cried one of my *señoritas* during a lesson in Cuba; to which heart-cry, with a wink, I could only respond, "We find it rather hard ourselves."

As for the foreign tongues, I love them, but only as a good Christian loves his enemies, to wit, with both cheeks smarting. German was my first try, and well do I remember her parting slap. The prepositions that govern the dative case I had memorized so devotedly that I can recite them yet. It was the same with those governing the accusative. But those very common ones that sometimes govern the one and sometimes the other—how could I predict their effect in any given instance? This it appeared was a matter of psychic "feel," at which cruel news my heart sank, and after that I really did not learn much German.

With French my attempt at conquest has been less disastrous. However, it is like owning a violin that I can't play well, and on which I am too bashful to practice when anybody is listening who might help me to improve. What I want is not help but (I blush to say it) to have my French thought to be a marvel.

In Haiti, in the highland pastures where the quail whistle, blackberries plumpen, and pines comb the clouds with their shaggy

boughs, I have lain on the grass and grown downright chatty with the mountain innocents. Jolting with bus passengers on their way to a funeral in the Martinique hinterland my tongue was loosened, or with the St. Barts Normans as I shall tell you later. The children were best of all on any French-speaking island. For with these dear friends it was I who was the bilingual wizard: in a group if I am not to achieve a position of some brilliance I don't say much. No, where my traveling companions know any English, that is the language we employ. The blunders I leave to these conceited smarty-pants. If they are so clever, let them do the work.

My wooing of Spanish has been both more recent and more dismal. Ah me! "the language of heaven," Charles V called it; he was a politic Hapsburg. In Puerto Rico I bought *El Mundo* every day from some chanting newsboy and usually could tell well enough whether I was reading about a Rotary luncheon or the wars in Europe. But there is no greater difference between such a luncheon and such wars than lies between reading a language and using it. That the eye is at home by no means insures that the ear and tongue are likewise.

Grumpily hunched up in some island café with French or Spanish being shot off about me like irritating firecrackers, I have given over yearning for a miracle of understanding and fallen to dreaming of a language really easy to learn. Why put up with the hard ones now current?

Primitive tongues, I'm told, such as that still spoken by our accomplished neighbors, the Eskimos, are the most complex. The classic tongues that evolved from them, though some improvement over Eskimo, were more needlessly elaborate than those, called "modern," that were evolved in turn during the Dark Ages. If evolution is to be true to itself, then we ought still to be on the road toward increased simplicity—like the dogs in

Martin Armstrong's fable whose goal was to compress language into the two all-expressive vocables *bow* and *wow*.

Yes, the latest linguistic invention to be put to wide use is English, and though here was a step in the right direction, let me remind you that its date was not recent. Chaucer by writing a durable masterpiece in the new medium settled its design over a century before Columbus's voyage.

Unfortunately, printing was invented soon after: English was hardened into type before it had had time to achieve homogeneous character. To this day it is a sort of succotash, Teutonic beans and Latin corn. But its grammar, thank heaven, by Chaucer's time and long before Caxton's had won a simplicity unknown in its parent languages, as its French parent was simpler than the Latin grandparent.

In the days of its formation it had to be easy. It was the pidgin talk of the sluts and bumpkins who needed to make contact somehow with their Norman overlords. But after it had grown to be more than a makeshift for simple-wits and even after it had been dignified by Chaucer's masterpiece, it was ignored by the schools for three hundred years. The professors' task was to police the classics. Poor Shakespeare! he had no English dictionary nor thesaurus to turn to and only one tentative and unreverenced grammar book. Blundering along, he wrote "those springs, on chaliced flowers that lies," without causing the lifting of one Oxford eyebrow.

While I listened to the Papiamento sermon in Curaçao that All Saints' Day—I couldn't understand it, let me admit—my mind

wandered off into the reflection that the local blacks, like the Anglo-Saxons of Norman England, had done the job of developing a pidgin talk here in modern times. When Sir John Hawkins, in Queen Elizabeth's good ship the *Jesus of Lübeck*, put in at this port with a cargo of Negroes in 1565, the slave trade was already an old thing to be sure. But it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the islands were given their henceforth-to-be-black population in incessant traffic from Africa: Ibos, Congos, Mandingos, and slaves of a dozen other tribes. These newcomers spoke languages related in construction but "mutually unintelligible," which hindrance to communication the slaveholders tenderly preserved: the more unable the slaves were to understand each other, the less able they were to hatch a large-scale revolt.

But the day came when it was no longer practicable to segregate such groups. When the Ibos began to intermingle with the Mandingos, whose language prevailed? Neithers. Both used the language of their masters, of which everybody—laborers and especially house servants—had had to learn something. It was English of a kind in Jamaica, for example; French of a kind in Haiti; and a kind of Spanish in Curaçao, which island, though Dutch, was the slave mart for the Spanish Main. But it was "bad Spanish" or "bad French," as English was "bad French" in the twelfth century.

In fact it was baby talk, to use a homely term. The first preoccupation was to acquire a vocabulary, as a baby's is; grammar, when enough words had been learned to link into sentences, was allowed to follow simple and regular patterns. For the distinguishing badge of good baby talk is its consistency: having learned to say, "I opened the door," a baby, if he has normal gumption, will also say, "I shutted the door." Such an error we grownups find laughable, but it is an inane opinion. The mistake made proves that the baby is not merely memorizing like a parrot but reasoning like a philosopher.

Thus, consistency is one of the merits of Papiamento and the other Creole tongues. In the West Indies of 1700, say, the midday of slavery, there were twelve Negroes for every white man—the white man's "good" English or "good" French never quite managed to prevail.* It was like a household of twenty-four babies and only the usual two parents: thanks to mere force of numbers the babies derived most of their speech habits from one another, and thus baby talk became the standard.

Creole English is still dismissed as "bad English," though I imagine a patient study of it would prove it as much simpler than "good" English, as English is simpler than its forbears. It is a language without honor. The scholars of the British West Indies focus their spectacles on other things, on tracing the policies of dim ex-governors, or refighting white-man naval battles that have been fought over and over again already. The affairs of the huge majority of the population, that is, the black portion, get scant notice.

However, folk tales in dialect are in print, and collections of negro proverbs, and very odd the English in them looks. *Pig ax him mumma say, wha mek him mout long so?* runs a Jamaican fable; *Him say, no mine, me pickney; dat someting mek fe me long so, mek fe you long so too.* The old sow (to translate) tells her inquisitive piglet that what has made her mouth so long, one day will lengthen his: youth, appalled by the deformities of age, receives no comfort from the elder generation.

Even so short a sample of Creole English puts the amateur philologist in me in a twitter. I note the Negro tendency to suppress the letters *r* and *th*; the multiple duty done by a few pronouns—*him* does for "his," "her," and "she," as in Papiamento the ultra-streamlined pronoun *e* serves for "he," "him," "she," "her," and "it"—and then with happy gaze I examine the invariability

* In Cuba and Puerto Rico, predominantly white then as now, and to a lesser degree in mulatto Santo Domingo, "good" Spanish of course survived.

of the verb *mek*, "to make." *Mek* it is in the present tense where we should say "makes"; *mek* in the past where we should say "made"; and in the future, where we should say "will make," it is *mek* again, as neat as a button.* Oh! the luxury of it!

In the French islands, and in places once French, such as Haiti, St. Lucia, or the Apperly brothers' Dominíca, Creole French is the people's language. Unlike Creole English, it is taken seriously. Not only have its proverbs and country songs been collected, but philologists have wrinkled their foreheads studying its structure, and poets of the high-brow school have woven verses in it. Its *vifs raccourcis* and *langueurs imagées* are the admiration of Paris esthetes; and the disarming directness of a language that translates "jockstrap" as *djac-papa*, and "brassière" as *djac-maman*, ruffles the august whiskers of the Academy in a gale of young-hearted laughter.

However, it is not properly a written language. The poets and scholars who use or study it, transcribe it in as many various spellings, and very formidable some of their systems are. But the people who habitually speak Creole do not write it; no standard orthography has been hammered out by the multitude. If you want to know its character, you still must go to the islands and listen. *Faut ous dormir côté Jean pour connain ronfler Jean*, as the Haitians say: "You have to sleep with Jack to appreciate his snore."

If you want to appreciate Papiamento, on the other hand, you can exchange letters with a friend in Curaçao, or subscribe for *La Cruz, prijs: cinco florin pa anja paga padlanti.*† This paper will perhaps not have much world news in it, but it displays in humdrum print, week by week, a Spanish that would make old Charles V drop back in astonishment.

New World Spanish, of course, nowhere is given the standard Castilian pronunciation; that of Santo Domingo, my linguist uncle

* Auxiliaries for expressing time are, however, a feature of the Creole tongues. *Will* has been omitted here because of the sententious fable style.

† This looks to me like, "Price: five florins per year, paid in advance."

tells me, differs most from the classic model. But as written Spanish it is very much all cut from the same piece of cloth—that is, except Papiamento. For Papiamento is the Creole Spanish invented by the old slaves of Curaçao for their own use; and while they were at their job of simplification they did not hesitate to weave in ragtags of the Dutch vocabulary, and French, and Portuguese, and English, as these came to hand.

The chief elements of Papiamento are Spanish, however, with the Dutch second in importance. It is a natural combination, since this mart of the Spanish Main has been so long held by the Netherlanders. In more than language, in fact, Curaçao shows its double heritage.

When the boys gather at night on the benches of Brionplein to play their cuatros and guitars and tip back their hats when the girls stroll by, the waltz songs they sing are Spanish, but Dutch too by an unexpected blending. It is as if Spanish music were being played by a German band: the rhythms become more banal, the tunes more buxom. And very sweet they are: the lights twinkle on the harbor waters where Queen Emma Bridge, on its pontoons, rides tranquilly; the policeman, with the orange of Orange-Nassau at his collar and sleeve cuffs, stands in the bridgehead limelight like a band leader directing traffic; while the music, every note comfortably familiar though the tunes may be new, winds its way skyward with the Spanish rustle of stringed instruments.

Curaçao's architecture is Dutch more singleheartedly. The yellow gables with their white-painted scrolls and baroque parapets that hang mirrored in the calm-flowing Rif Water, the steep tile roofs and chunky dormers, are straight from Delft or Dordrecht despite the rainless, never wintry skies that burn above them.

Marketing is done Dutch style from sloops tied to the quays that lead in to Waaigat yacht basin; but it is not *mevrouw* in a white cap who does the buying, it is *señora* in a black mantilla.

The huckster-sailors with whom she haggles are not Dutchmen either; above their unshaven Venezolano faces the brims of their sombreros swoop in fine bandit curves; they have sailed over from the less desert mainland with their fruit-stall and green-grocer cargoes. Very animated is the discussion of the price of *tomati*, *awacati*, and bananas, as the masts lazily nod and the green water gurgles between quay masonry and hull.

But if Papiamento is a language so standard and habitual in Curaçao that not only is it used in the market place, but in the cathedral pulpit, in printed newspapers, and official traffic signs, it is lucky enough, as English was in Shakespeare's day, yet to be unpoliced by pedants. Likewise Creole French, though it is admired by the knowing, and Creole English, though its proverbs have been collected, are free too of the textbook blight. They have still the freshness of a bird's song or a green lizard's twitter.

Whether Papiamento or some other actually "modern" language is the speech of the future I cannot say, nor whether any of our current school of dictators could be persuaded to force its blessings on a reluctant world. Napoleon, with the momentum of the French Revolution behind him, outlawed the dear old irrational coinage and weights and measures of his country, and gave most of Europe a taste of that utopian professors' dream, the decimal-and-metric system. With all the governmental bossing we have now, is there no agency to cow us into trying Esperanto?

No, it will have to be the language itself, I fear, that overmasters

us with its obvious goodness. Meanwhile, here lies Curaçao, swimming in sunshine, for a sort of laboratory in which such a modern tongue is being tested and tinkered with daily for us, in a free, popular, and large-scale experiment.

There may be some who will grumble to learn that this great intellectual work is being done by niggers. However, and though we whites show to advantage usually in some other respects, no less tart a critic of them than Hans Coudenhove (a German) has declared that "Negroes are the greatest linguists on earth." The secret is that language is primarily vocal, and these island blacks, even though they can write it, do not polish their Papiamento in that secondary form. Print records the progress of their experiment year by year and there its function ends.

As a writer I should shun no serpent more fearfully than this exalting of the spoken over the written word. Nor should the tombstone man breathe anything to belittle inscriptions carved in everlasting granite. But if language, for me, were as purely a vocal thing as it is for these West Indians, instead of print and epitaphs, I might be as ready a linguist as one of them. In their islands, my predicament was like that of the white American officers who commanded Negro troops in France during the first World War: while their privates caught a knowledge of French from mid-air, as if it were a baseball, they dug fruitlessly for it in *French Made Easy*.

Yes, that too intelligent process of hearing with the eyes is only too tediously familiar. The foreign words that hurtle upon me in real life, to be accepted by my brain must register first in writing, as if I were a hotel. Book before me I learned my French, and book-learned shall I die. Meanwhile your poor laborer in Tortola or Carriacou turns lightly from English to Spanish to Creole French: a voyage in a sloop has been his education, or a year in Venezuela. Learning a language with his ears has cut the difficulty in half.

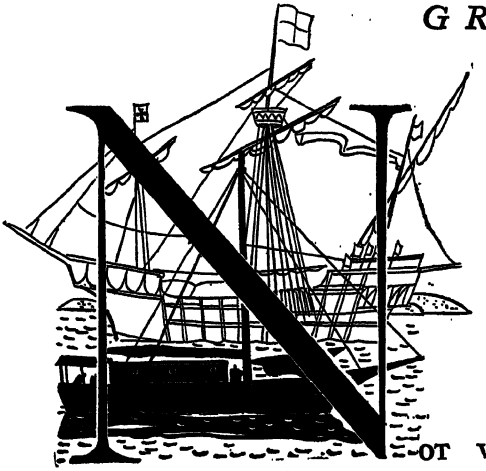
Thus, if language at bottom is these peasants' talking and hearing, rather than our (nevertheless delightful) reading and writing, perhaps they are better equipped to build the language of the new day than we. While making it simple, they very likely will know also how to make it popular. Thus far the paper languages have not shown much vitality outside the libraries in which they were born: there is nothing harder than to induce the world to be merely rational, as the professors who invented Esperanto long-since despairingly admitted. We want the human touch.

Since life on my own island will follow the ideal pattern, the most spritely of current languages will be current there. I shall go on reading dear old English, even if it is succotash, and writing it too no doubt. But a more perfect enterprise also will be afoot. Very promptly I shall establish a Chair of Papiamento.

Already this feature of the island's educational system has been planned; I see it now, a flat rock in the middle of a stream. Better, I feel its deep moss yield beneath me. All around, lying on their bellies with the water pouring over them, or bouncing on the low boughs of a mango tree, are my teachers, the island children.

There is plenty of laughter at my bungling first efforts to be talkative; but one small schoolmarm, when I am genuinely stuck, is sure to climb up on the rock beside me, her hair drawn into tight knots on her solemn head, and her brown skin glistening with water drops.

What she whispers in my ear are lessons never forgot. And after class, with mind still frolicsome, I hope to pick up the lingo of the birds and lizards; silence too, I must not omit to cultivate. The brook fish will be there to help me in that final enterprise, poised motionless in the shadow of the rock.



Chapter VI.

NOT WITHOUT SOME RAPTUROUS anxiety on the part of her one passenger, the *Alice Mable* worked her way between the breakers on Steventon bar and was at sea again.

The sun rose, the clouds turned salmon color with a wisp of rainbow risen up among them, the billows toppled, and Cook, hovering near, was obviously obsessed with thoughts of breakfast.

"Can't set the table, eh, Cook?" said the captain.

"No, sir," said Cook, glad to be noticed. "Too rough."

"Well, bring your things back here," said the captain. "Put the dishes in a pan, and put the pan on the floor as low as you can get it, and let the chief know that breakfast is ready."

The ham and hominy soon appeared, the coffee cups, the big black pot and the little strainer; the chief, too, with his hair brushed down in morning neatness. And while the world dropped from under us, or boosted us sky-high, or reeled dizzily about our heads, the captain on one knee said grace and we ate.

Grace was the regular thing on that Bahamian mail boat. Usually the captain said it, but sometimes he would ask the chief, a young man, to bless the table. They both know how—two Abacó men, from Hope Town, which is a seafaring and God-fearing place. Thus, though the *Alice Mable* had neither style, comfort, nor speed, she could not be said to be graceless. One of the things I liked best about her (and before the trip was

done I was truly attached to her) was this homelike grace saying

But there are graces and graces. On the return voyage we had two Anglican priests aboard, going to Nassau synod: they said it for us, crossing themselves, and rattling off the formula with practiced dispatch. It was very nice to have the hominy blessed by professionals, I suppose, but the Lord (if He is anything like me) must have wished with a sigh for something fresher. The captain's grace was what I liked; it gave the food more sweetness and in an unexpected way linked up the humdrum mail trip of the *Alice Mable* with the first marine doings in the Bahamas.

Columbus was a prayerful man though only an amateur officially. On his second voyage he had the Benedictine, Father Buyl, to give professional weight to the devotions; but on the first when God's help must have been more passionately wanted it was mariners' prayers that were sung night and morning. When from the New World's first blue anchorages the *Salve Regina* joyfully was raised, plain sailors were the "exiled children of Eve" who raised it: for all the twang of their rough husky voices, the islanders listening on the shore thought they heard music made by men from heaven.

Where the anchorages were, that idyllic first week in the Bahamas, is not exactly known, at least not by me. The settled opinion is, however, that Columbus's landfall was San Salvador, the outmost though not the eastmost of the islands. From that first landing place he departed southward in a zigzag course that led away through the Crooked Island Passage.

His journal of these zigzags, hurrying in excitement from island to island, is not easy to follow on a chart; but Captain Becher of the Royal Navy, puzzling over the problem three centuries and a half later, decided that one zig took him into Exuma Sound. At Exuma Harbor, it was, Becher decided, that the fleet first took on water in quantity after the long voyage—the islanders, naked and good-natured, helping to roll the barrels.

should like to think this a true guess, though more recent ographers do not cheer me much in the enterprise. With its cays, white bluff, and wind-bent trees, it looks a fit setting for history. Here too, to come to our own unmomentous story, the *Alice Mable* dropped her anchor, the townspeople proved friendly, and sailors' grace ushered in the supper.

True enough, I also saw Long Island, where it is sure Columbus touched. Our outmost stopping place was Simms, on that island, a country road at the plain's sea edge, with a few hip-roofed houses and solemn shut-up churches scattered along it, and trees and cornfields planted in the porous rock. With its long shore, endless road, and distant long low hills, it seemed not the scene of history but of a quiescent datelessness.

Its role, in fact, as the captain remarked while we were bringing in the mail, is astronomical rather than earthly. It lies precisely on the Tropic: when the Sun comes to Simms and can look down Mrs. Simms's well he turns south again and goes back to the Amazon.

We too turned back there, with the settlement's two weeks' accumulation of mail aboard. The wind and the High Church clerics were with us now, we came back to Nassau flying. But the struggling journey out suited me better. It had more of the sea and the islands in it, thanks to its day difficulties, peaceful night anchorages, and its slowness.

As far as Steventon I had had a fellow passenger. He was a Simms of Simms, a mechanic going back to that place from Nassau to make a proposal of marriage to his girl.

Simms was a real Conch or islander, who didn't feel comfortable with his shoes laced. His broad silver-palm hat turned up in

front when he looked into the wind, and when he looked off to sea a slow satisfaction came into his face because boats and blue brine had been so much a part of his life from its beginning. But his opinion of the *Alice Mable* will not bear repeating here. In the billows of Exuma Sound she made two miles an hour, which was worse than standing still to a man with a proposal pent up in his bosom.

True, the delay was of some use to him. He gargled or sucked lozenges to sweeten his voice. Thanks to a current fit of hoarseness his most frivolous remark sounded like the croak of an oracle at the bottom of a cave, and he felt this should be cured for the good of the business in hand.

But at Steventon his patience blew up. Spitting out a curse together with the last lozenge, he took his bicycle ashore and rode over hill and dale to our next stop to get the Old Nick out of his legs. It was night, but moonlight, and he reached George Town sixteen hours before we did, in spite of the gates to open and cows to shy rocks at that cumbered the limestone road.

His hoarseness was no better when we met again, but he was improved in meekness. Besides, he had been given a bag of fine tomatoes by a farmer, and another of bananas, which cheered him. I, too, in George Town, was befriended by a lively colored man who loaded a small boy with okra, guavas, papayas, and green lettuce, and sent him with the stranger to the wharf. The captain had picked up two loaves of bread, fresh-baked by the constable's wife. We dined well at anchor that night; there was something besides hominy to say grace over.

And afterward, when the moon was up again, hustling through the whiffy white clouds that drove across the sky, and the glassy water rustled under our black hull, Simms soothed his throat with tangerine juice, sugar, and rum, in which medication the chief and I willingly shared. The captain, a teetotaler, sat with us, smoking a cigar, spinning yarns of hurricanes—the tough *Alice*

Mable had weathered several—and cracking Bible jokes. Though it was an agony to his gullet, these jests set Simms to laughing. "Cap'n Carey," he would wheeze, kicking his heels joyfully against the wheelbox, "you're the jokiest old fellow I'se knowed in all my days!"

In fact we were much at home there, anchored out of the wind. My companions, all Conchs of old families, knew these cays and bright blue channels like the pockets of a long-worn pair of pants. Ashore in the settlements they greeted everybody, black and white. Simms was always hailing relatives. When the captain set up his parasol on wharf or beach to distribute parcels, it was like the home-coming of a benign potentate.

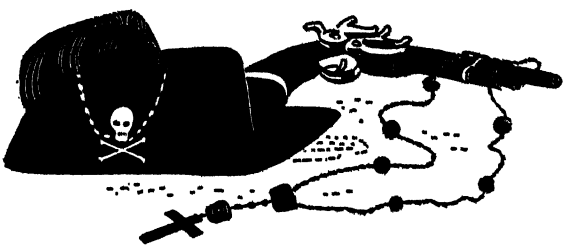
In Exuma Harbor I too had a homelike feeling, stranger though I was. Simms's tangerine toddy was responsible in part, perhaps, but more lasting in its comfort was the knowledge that I had well-wishers ashore. Recollection rose in my brain of my colored benefactor's garden, and of his whitewashed house, set in a pink ring of shells. To put me at ease, while he went off for the papayas, his sister who had lived in the lighthouse on Cay Lobos told me of happenings in that still less visited place: how her small niece and nephew wheeled their red toy wheelbarrows on the sand, and "The music on the radio so sweet, very oftentimes we all get to dancin'." From her report of it, the remote island life could very well be merry, I judged. But she was a merry girl herself, with a clear tuneful voice; the grace of her gestures and the bright way her pigtails wagged made everything she said seem pretty.

But old Columbus, anchored off that shore with his sailors fast asleep around him after their prayers, must have peered out at its lightlessness with troubled eyes. He had found the Bahamas beautiful to be sure. Almost any land would have looked good after the anxieties of the voyage. Moreover, he was a Mediterranean, used to the rocky, not really verdant shores of the classic sea. If the English sailor or Irishman in his crews had written

the journal, its entries might not have given these limestone cays the name of so green a paradise: to the Northerner their greenery is olive and silver for the most part. The parrots and flamingos, however, were the admiration of all. The people, the brown islanders, for innocence, gentleness, and good nature, were beyond praise.

But he had embarked not to find Arcady, but the Orient. He had a letter to deliver to the Great Khan! Besides, he was man of the world enough to know that descriptions of a bird life and society more charming than its own would not satisfy Spain. The riches of the heathen were what he had come for, to reward his backers, and (his own share, this was to be) to finance a new Crusade to deliver Jerusalem from the Turks. He had spent the best years of his life plaguing the courts of Europe to send him on this voyage; now here he was with gout beginning to cripple his joints, and found the people naked. They swam to the ships with balls of cotton to barter; it was their sole commodity. How many such balls would it take to rescue the Holy City?

Columbus wasted no ink on the foolish computation, but with morning sang morning prayers with his crews and sailed away for Cuba, of which island he had begun to hear. It was the last the Bahamas saw of their first, greatest, and not least Christian navigator.



Navigation, however, is the Bahamas' chief art to this day. Their vast web of reefy waters has been sailed by Christians of

various kinds ever since the discovery, including both pirates and good souls like Captain Carey.

The pirates' Christianity, to be sure, tended somewhat away from their faith's basic precepts. But habits of piety did persist in many of their lives, or even quite unmistakable religious glimmers. That any of them said grace habitually over their stolen pork I am not ready now to prove, but it is a probability. These hard men had their decorums.

Ned Low, for one, and the meanest of the lot, was a strict Sabbatarian. His London childhood had been passed in wig snatching: he rode in a lidded basket on his brother's back, and into the basket he would twitch a good wig when it came within his reach. From wig snatching to piracy was a natural step; but no matter which he was doing he kept the Sabbath, and his ships' crews did likewise, playing selected games and "reading good books."

Another Sabbath keeper was the magnificent Captain Roberts. Wearing a cross of diamonds on his bosom and drinking no liquor stronger than tea, he devastated Barbados's and Jamaica's shipping. Gambling, brawls, and women aboard, alike were prohibited by this moral man; on Sundays "the music" could not touch their instruments. "And may the Lord prosper your handy-works!" he exclaimed earnestly, after instructing some disciples in the fine points of the profession.

On the vessels captained by Misson and Caraccioli, a code prevailed that would do credit to a Baptist Home. Swearing was an intolerable offense; lectures on ethics and the good life were a part of daily routine. Even the terrible Morgan sailed in a ship called the *Good Samaritan.* And who can forget the piety of Captain Daniel, who kidnapped the priest of the Saintes to say Mass on his vessel, and shot one of his own men during the Elevation because he had omitted to kneel? The service which had opened with a salvo of gunfire ended with the splash of the dead

body in the sea. It was an occasion that must have made the good priest sweat.

My friend Father Marcian agreed in the surmise. New in the tropics, he was finding perspiration only too automatic. For the Benedictines of the Bahamas, these days—Buyl's more evangelical successors—come from my own chilblainy Minnesota. Years ago, the tale is, there was a shipwreck on a Bahamian reef, on which occasion with impetuous spirit down knelt a monk aboard, and vowed that his abbey would take the Church's affairs in these islands in its care if all were saved. All were, miraculously. Thus, and to their great surprise, the Fathers of my own countryside found themselves reëstablishing Catholicism where Columbus had devoutly planted his green cross on the earliest day of New World annals. Before setting off on the perspirational venture, the first of the new missionaries read his first Mass in Cold Spring, my own village, and Father Marcian had done the same.

"This business has its funny side!" he crowed, and told how a black Andros congregation, blessed with a box of donated clothing, had appeared at church next Sunday, every man jack and woman jill in a lace-edged corset. That was what the Lord had sent, with a New York mission society as His intermediary. It made Father Marcian chuckle.

Divine jokes, however, were not the whole of the story; he had been more than a mite homesick, I suspect. Cold Spring was what he craved to talk about on our afternoon's drive out of Nassau. The sea beneath Clifton Bluff shone like a spread-out gorgeous peacock's tail—what a pulpit from which to preach the radiant Gospel! Home gossip, however, I was abundantly able to provide. We gave over talking of mission mishaps and the buccaneers' piety and settled gratefully on Main Street.

But the buccaneering itself that had preyed on the Spanish treasure fleets of the seventeenth century had been a pious enterprise in a sense. It was the last long unofficial battle of the old

Wars of Religion. As a rule, the buccaneers were British, Dutch, or Huguenot. "The Lutherans," they were called in Spain, where news of their impudent successes made many a grandee tear his beard.

Tortuga, "the Turtle," was the chief center from which these becutlassed zealots sailed to give the Papists some intercourse with virtue—an island off Haiti's rich north coast. After I had left Nassau I came by Tortuga and saw its dark silhouette, the wind flapping my pajamas in the middle of the night. From the ship's galley came a whiff of bread fresh from the oven; on shore, at the same instant, one feeble light blinked awake. Good heavens! and what tumults of torch-lit feasting the island had seen in its lurid prime! and how my bare feet would have arched in anxiety, then, on the lonely deck at so careless an approach to the den of vengeance!

Paralysis had seized on Spanish shipping, sure enough, thanks to Tortuga's Lutherans. The fleets dreaded to move. But when wealth piled up in the ports of Mexico and the Spanish Main, the buccaneers turned filibuster, amphibious like our Marines, and took fortresses and cities, ravaging their warehouses and treasuries. *And* their churches; they never omitted to tweak the Pope's nose when they came across a richly furnished altar. As good Protestants they knew both the sinfulness of silver images and their value when melted down.

But the simplicity of this Protestant-Catholic contest, never perfect, grew more and more obscure. Could a just God intend profits like these to be reserved for Lutherans? When Michel-the-Basque sacked Maracaibo in the orthodox days of Louis XIV and made off with the altar vessels, he assured the priests and nuns that "this part of the booty would serve for the building of a splendid church at Turtle Island, to Our Lady of Victories." He spoke as one Catholic to another, please note; Tortuga was blessed

now with a return to the Roman faith. It was good news of a kind for his distracted victims.

When such confusion of buccaneering aims came in, the classic age was over. Mere sea robbery was on the way. The last chapter came when the Spanish colonials themselves turned pirate, and dodged about Cuban waters on mean and niggling forays.

Meanwhile the Bahamas shared in the excitement in all its phases. Flanking the Straits of Florida and the Windward Passage, their maze of channels, cays, and reefs was as if made for a sea robber's resort.

New Providence was the rendezvous. In Nassau those bad female pirates Anne Bonny and Mary Read brazened the wharves, and Teach lurched and leered, twisting the braids of his blue-black whiskers between fingers hardly less serpentine. The place was a scandal. Worse, it became a bother. Its scallawag citizens upset British trade with the more productive colonies.

For this reason, in 1718, Woodes Rogers was sent out as governor. The pirates knew their man, he had been a buccaneer himself. Two hundred of them obsequiously received his pardon, but enough skulkers were hung to give discipline to the new regime. Eight in one day were strung up, chanting psalms while waiting for the hangman.

Wrecking now was turned to, to give island talents scope for their activity. When some vessel or other was cast on the reefs by act of God, the Bahamians piled into their sloops and went out to salvage her cargo.

Questioning acts of God is an impiety, but Lloyd's and the Philadelphia lawyers soon were guilty of just this naughty practice. Were the Bahamas accursed? Why was their navigation so

fatal to rotten but well-insured old vessels? The more the evidence was studied, the more likely it appeared that some of these acts of God had been engineered by islanders made in His image. Thus, as the mother country had outlawed piracy she now built lighthouses and ruined wrecking.

But the darkness that had ceased to serve as the excuse for such fair-weather disasters, regained its value during the twin eras of blockade-running and rumrunning. The dark of the moon found the seas liveliest in Civil War and Prohibition times, and cash freest in happy Nassau. Mainland abnormalities are always that smart community's bonanzas.

The *Banshee*, first steel ship to cross the ocean, was built to run the Confederate ports' blockade. She made only eight trips between Nassau and the seaboard before being captured, but even so her owners realized 700 per cent on their investment. Nor were they pocketing undue profits: a plain seaman in those champagne cocktail days earned $250 or more per trip. Such was the price the South had to pay her friends for uniform buttons or pistols trans-shipped from Boston hid in lard.

Rumrunning brought an even brighter era: it lasted longer. During the first five years of Prohibition, island imports of wines and spirits multiplied twenty-five times. It is not officially known what happened to this flood, but in the breezy cupola of Nassau's library when I thumbed through the newspapers of the time I found hints to help me trace its movement. Not in the news, nothing so tactless; instead, from some dignified "ad" out would pop the footnote, "We also have a well-stocked warehouse at West End, Grand Bahama." West End is a port you may not have heard of. Ordinarily its importance is nil. But in rumrunning days a thousand vessels a year cleared at West End: it was the port handiest to the mainland.

The actual rumrunners, as it happens, were not Bahamians. The heirs to the swashbuckling tradition now took the profits without the risks. Their schooners plied no farther than to West End

or served as floating depots from which the crude bootleggers could pick up their goods. It was the refined climax to a long history of sea daring.

Did any of those skippers, I wonder, call down God's blessing on the hominy while ferrying Gilbey's gin to the dark meeting place? Very likely so, it was a routine errand. It would seem, however, as if God might find the sentiment poor and wish that the prayers were torn more heartily from more abandoned sinners.

But God's inscrutability, as I'm sure you will agree, is beyond my scrutiny. I don't know which kind of sinner He is happier to hear from, legal bootlegger or rum-soaked pirate. Perhaps He prefers the bread-and-butter monotony of prayer from such faithful souls as Columbus or the *Alice Mable's* captain; or the surprise vows that mushroom abruptly from the depths of some Benedictine's shipwreck-quickened soul. Perhaps Simms's curse, heartfelt and lozenge flavored, tickled the Divine Majesty, or the rattlety-bang grace said by our two High Church clerics.

This brings me to a thought, to wit, that a military man at a banquet is not expected to do the manual of arms before he eats, nor is a banker at a luncheon reverently asked to make a loan. But if there is a clergyman at table, be it on land or sea, it is thought necessary to impose professional duties on the fellow. Prayer is forced on him as it was on the sweating priest of the Saintes—it is Captain Daniel's Mass again, minus the gunfire and the picturesqueness. No, when the clergy dines with me on my own green isle, another custom shall prevail. A sung blessing with voices joined will be, I think, the ticket.

But stop! now I perceive a beauty in the grace gabbled by our Anglicans—its resignation. Like me, they'd have preferred the fresher event of course. I can picture them now with English faces de-stiffened by surprise, kneeling on the deck that wind-tossed morning, listening to the Captain's homely phrases. And I can hear them cry "Amen!" too, as the ship lifts on a high wave.

FROM CALABASH BAY TO PORT-AU-PRINCE

Chapter VII.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO IN CHURCH are edified by virtue, and in taverns are horrified by vice. Angels move at their elbows. But there are others, by devils guided, who do just the opposite: in church, with wrinkling nose they smell the worm's sawdust excrement, whereas in taverns they see loveliness beam about them from the hardest visages. Of the two, the latter group is the more smug one to my notion—it preens itself so on sensing what lies beneath the skin of things.

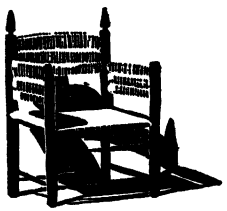
In addition there is a small group that smells the worm in either place—small, because its members frequently throw themselves off bridges. Last of all comes the Sunshine Club to which band I belong. We are always being edified, whether it is in church or rumshop, and so give neither angels nor devils any lasting satisfaction.

In general, however, going to church is not thought much fun. When Sunday comes, a nap on the sun porch appeals to us as more likely to be stimulating. But very often, when I do go, some unpretentious preacher laboring among his platitudes will illumine me with a new flash of truth. The struggle to sing the bass part in even a not-good hymn is exercise of a worthy kind. And, very fruitful for the traveler, the business of putting on

best clothes and coming in tune with Higher Things in public gives him a ready means of joining the life of the places he visits.

In Spain, tourists swarm to bullfights to feel the vitality of the Spanish people about them, or in Germany they haunt beer gardens with a like educational end in view. But in the Spanish or German churches these same citizens who were bellowing awhile back for blood or beer are "themselves" with equal naturalness. Nor is the quiet phase any the less worth observation. I never learned so much so fast about the Gallic spirit as at Quaker meeting, once, in Paris.

But attending church to snoop is neither fruitful nor polite. The Holy Rollers do not find me sniggering in a back row: it would be like going to a bridge club uninvited or to a bullfight without some taste for gore. No, it is necessary to be inconspicuous and to be touched by the truth of people's enthusiasms, at least a little, before their behavior has much meaning to observe.



Its church gives Calabash Bay a special tone—but I did not know this when I was taken by the looks of the place. I saw it first as I did Gouyave, from the sea in passing, and came back to try its human quality.

People complain, sometimes, that the West Indies are all alike, as if the Shakespearean flavor of all of Shakespeare's plays were a point against them. They make a harmonious family, but different parts of even one play or island can show striking contrasts. The Jamaican north coast, for example, is one long bower: in St. Ann's, where Columbus on his last voyage lay bedridden when his rotting ships could explore no farther, the coconut trees lean out in

endless groves, and irrepressible waterfalls pour out from higher woodlands. Pedro, however, a south-coast district of the same island, with Calabash Bay one of its fishing villages, tends toward the arid, a sad, open, savanna country.

Behind Pedro the long ridge of the Santa Cruz Mountains steeps in the sun, a giant sawhorse with dusty patchwork quilt of fields thrown over it. No St. Ann's sinuous coconut trees line the grassgrown dunes by the shore; the trees that punctuate the district are thatch palms stiff as brushes, tough lignum vitaes with blue stars sown over their dense lumps of foliage, and calabash trees with fruit swung ponderously at the tips of knob-knuckled wandy boughs. "Cut me a calabash switch!" command irate Pedro fathers, which sets the boys to blubbering that they never will sin again.

Or Great Pedro Bluff, there, jutting roughly into the blue Caribbean, is a scratch-patch of cactus, thorns, and briars. After the spring rains have come down from the hills, such a rush of blossoming sweeps through it as only a dry-country wilderness can show. Orchids of grape-jelly red hang in sheaves from the cactus boles, acacias tumble into a froth of yellow, and the yoke-wood, in nooks in the Chinese sculpture of the rock, girlishly shakes out its petticoats of pale-pink frilly flowers.

As for the Pedro people, they were a surprise.

In Jamaica the pattern of country society is set by the plantations, usually. At the center of each is a nucleus of white management with its servants in a black ring around it. Around this, in hundreds of acres of bush and field, the ex-slave populace lives, its labor bought by the management as needed. The land these Negroes live on, in villages of paintless shanties, they rent very cheaply, and also that worked as provision gardens. When they marry, if "good tenants," the white lady sends a cake. Competent and angelic she descends to lend a hand when the fever burns. It is a childlike round for the majority, free of possessions and few but delegated responsibilities. As my uncle the philologist

suggests, Jamaica is what the American South would be if there had been no Civil War.

Pedro, however, conforms to another pattern. As in not our South but our Southwest, whose profitless deserts saved it for the Indians, drought seems to have saved Pedro for its colored people. There is no white landlord in the district to watch the fields crack in the too-constant sun.

But though crops may fail three years in a row, there still is enterprise in the place. The land is held in small plots, each with its thatched clean cabin of white or pink, around which oleanders blossom. As cheerful as the sight of these dwellings when I came riding down among them, was the news that the people who lived in them bred some of the island's most mettlesome horses, and also its beefiest cattle. A St. Ann's loafer can poke twigs in the moist earth and grow a hedge, but the Pedro graziers, Abe Lincoln style, split rails and build worm fences. At Calabash Bay it seemed an old-time, almost a Bible picture, when the black canoes came flying with their draughts of fish, white sails bent energetically to the brine. From beach-top wells of sun-parched Palestinian masonry the women watched them come, then strode off single file down the sands, calabash jugs balanced on their heads.

It would be false to say less than that I fell in love with the Bay people. They were the lovely kind. How had it happened that so many Scotch mariners had been stranded on this coast, settled, and left the legacy of Celtic blood? The brown country-folk and fishermen, with their blue eyes and taffy-colored wool, bore Scotch names proudly, and were no less proud of their Scotch code of honesty. They were polite, friendly, and self-respecting. It was one of those rare communities in the British islands where the lava of white benevolence had not hardened down from above, to keep the nonwhites in a proper order.*

* This is no longer wholly true. The coast is being opened to the tourist trade, which means that the best shore properties are in part now in alien white hands.

No one happened to die while I was staying at Calabash Bay, which was a cause of regret to everybody: a death in Pedro is not only the signal for genuine grief but for the district's chief social doings. When I heard their wakes described—"set-ups," the Bay people call them—they reminded me of the wags at home whose wills request band music at their funerals and direct the pall-bearers to pass cigars.

In the saddened house the elders sit, swapping anecdotes of the deceased and singing slow hymns in two-part harmony. Outside, the children play Simon-Says-Thumbs-Up in the moonlight, unless they are grown enough to join the young folks in their more strenuous revelry. These others—the most numerous group by far—play forfeits, ring games, kissing games, and strap games, in which last uproarious favorites you get a cruel licking if you let your wits woolgather or your legs rest for an instant.

Then out comes a guitar. Nicholas will thrum, say, and Cecil sing, staring into the instrument and wagging his head in rhythm with the long ballads of newspaper love and murder. Or it will be a humorous ditty with words in it that set the girls to flying to hide their unladylike guffaws. But Cecil or Tom Parchment, whose repertory is still more immense, do only the stanzas solo. In the choruses everybody joins and with bodies as well as voices.

Set-up or no, I heard some of Cecil's songs; and Bertha, when she made the bed, would repeat them for me until I could put the melodies on paper.

"If they feel a pain in their head,
Or a lizard drop on their bed,
The very first thing you are sure to hear
They are going to Father Killam from Vere,"

she sang, giving the pillows a practiced wallop.

Tom Parchment I several times visited in his "Glad Lane Navilty Shop." He was an ex-sailor who had been frozen in, in the Baltic, once. Once was enough for Tom. With the songs of all

nations filed away in his head, home he came to Pedro to marry a Bay girl and sell kerosene and notions. It was an event so well received by the public that the lane he settled on, in a ravine in a rocky ridge, was renamed Glad Lane for a celebration.

As for the Bay churchgoing, Glad Lane and a pasture path made my short cut to the meeting house. Settled on a stiff bench, I would be given a hymn book by Mrs. Parchment or some other one of the ladies. In a square space at the head of the room sat the musing Saints; one Sunday a man would preside at their Table, the next, a woman. For the religion of these people without a landlord is likewise independent of priest or preacher.

Quaker stillness filled the bare-as-poverty clean room. Everybody's clothes were of the freshest. Now and again one of the Saints would start a hymn: a few favorite tunes seemed to fit all texts. There was no organ. For accompaniment the lambs bleated out-of-doors and cows mooed, as if it were Bethlehem and these Plymouth Brethren were the shepherds who had been called in to be the Lord's first worshipers.

Simeon Reynolds prayed, as did others of the Saints. Old Mr. James rose, or some other, to expound the Scriptures. Salvation's plan at its simplest was the theme of these remarks invariably, as if the byways of Christianity could not draw them aside from its central wonder. Steeped all their lives in Bible reading, the Brethren spoke in the book's phraseology; the old poetry, like a lily, opened with fresh beauty in the white still room.

At length the Saints would partake of their Communion. A little loaf of bread would be broken and eaten, the cup would be passed. And soon after, in chatty home-going groups, we would disperse, I with a tract that had been pressed earnestly in my hand.

On my first visit I had had a half-crown ready for an offering, and thought how big it would look among the widows' mites.

But the token of vanity was not acceptable. Only the Saints were privileged to give, I was told gently. With no minister, organist, nor mixed quartet to hire and no Gothic sanctuary with a mortgage on it, their church exercises its religion with primitive plainness.

Of Calabash Bay I had known nothing before suddenly I went there. Port-au-Prince, on the other hand, in which city I heard Mass soon after, I knew well enough in books. But the place I had read of was as much a discovery as the one unheard-of. Nobody, certainly, had prepared me to find the Port-au-Princeton architecture Swiss.

But Swiss it was. From taxicab and then from hotel window I gawked out upon cuckoo clocks and chalets. Amid the bursts of tropical greenery were mansions in the taste of *Godey's Ladies' Book*, all jig-saw work, half-timber work, broad eaves, and steep-roofed towers. But this curious fashion, so long shrugged out of existence at home that we must come to Haiti to reappraise its merits, mingles its *Ladies' Book* charm with that of *Old Creole Days*. My window was first-rate for leaning purposes; for though

there was no unabashed life of the slums to watch from it, the mansion next door gave me plenty to admire.

It was in the Haitian chalet style, tall, elegant, and fantastic. Huge mango trees grew beside it in a yard paved in brick-divided squares of pebbles. At night I could glimpse a corner of the dinner table with its soft lights and goblets, but the children's eating porch was more open to my view. Mangoes loosed from a high bough by a black maid with well-aimed missiles, I soon would see laid in a dish on its green tablecloth.

The kitchen below, however, with its arched door and big tile stove was the room that showed day-round activity. Fascinated, I would watch the cook dispatch a chicken, singe it with a flaming knot of newspaper, and cut it into an earthen pot. By and by up would float the Creole savor of it, stewing with tomatoes, oil, and garlic.

There was another servant to mend and iron. She tilted back in a straw-bottomed chair and sewed on buttons. Or she would sweep up one of the little brown daughters for a crushing hug, or sing *Au clair de la lune* for the three of them while at her ironing.

Then out would tramp Nurse with soap and towels. Under the mango trees was a mossy basin with a tap above it, where one by one the little girls roared in anger as their ears were looked to. But soon, all suds and with buttocks glistening like brown butterscotch drops, they were turned loose to rinse themselves in a splashy frolic. It was not easy to bring this process to an end, but when it had been done and the girls' fresh panties had been snapped up around their middles, the gardener would call the poodle and soap and rinse her too. He was a peaceable old codger, who had enjoyed the tableau as much as I had.

Soon after, while the sun set like an apple of fire on the gold platter of the Gulf of Leogane, these *Old Creole Days* children would gather on the porch for supper; the governess would give one a push and another a pull, and presently, grace said, they

would cross themselves like birds folding their wings and settle down to eat.

Or sunset time, if I were in the streets, was like that happy hour in my old New York days when work was done and I had unclimbed morning's five long flights of stairs from the drafting room. These middle-class people trudging home had the same air of tired well-being that my workaday world had had. Desks were covered, now ease could be thought of. Were there any tombstone designers in the lot, I wondered, turning in at the gates to these white cuckoo clocks?

But more a symbol of Haiti was the shoeshine boy on the curb, bent up to count his day's few centimes. Half-naked, not for lack of either pants or shirt but because of the rents in both of these garments, he was as black as if he had shined himself by mistake. The Black Republic might be run by the white-collar high-browns I had been watching and the no more black politicos above them, but it was his country, nevertheless, geared to the easygoing pace of his class.

"Easygoing," however, is an ill-chosen term. Your West Indian Negroes are industrious by bursts. If I were their employer and my wife's next trip to Europe depended on profits earned by them for me, probably I should call them lazy: they interlard long tasks generously with repose. To the philosophy of the North such habits seem wicked. Idleness of any kind in a machine-dominated world spells rust and loss; whereas in a hand-labor world like Haiti's it can be considered beneficial. Men at rest recuperate their energies.

All day, nevertheless, footing the city's poorer streets, what I saw was not sloth but break-back endeavor. The porters pushed and staggered and poured off quarts of perspiration. At the cabinetmakers' the lathes screamed, driven by large-radius wheels cranked archaically by hand. In the markets, to be sure, people were sitting down and some of them were snoring. But these

thousands of women had toiled in on foot, ten, fifteen, perhaps twenty miles with crushing loads in the baskets on their heads. The loudest snorer in the lot could hardly be accused of laziness.

But the Port-au-Prince markets, greatest in the Antilles, are not between-journey resting places. Their female Herculeses come to sell their yams and scallions and to swap news with the women from other valleys. The hard journey, it is, that is incidental. On low-bottomed chairs in the wilderness of heaps of rice, charcoal, salt, flour, basketry, and produce, they jabber and laugh and haggle with the city hawkers.

As for these last-mentioned acrobats, I found them getting their exercise on the spot. How could they balance such towers of casseroles on their heads, or huge trays of mirrors, pins, pink combs, tinware, soaps, and votive candles? There were urchins with two dozen each of straw hats piled on their cucumber-shaped craniums and women with eyes just visible through heaped-on layers of Mother Hubbards.

At eleven the open air markets fell to the business of cooking lunch. Crones stirred pots ranged around them like kettledrums in an orchestra. Fried fish smoked in heaps. Dust blew. Juice-smeared tots strewed the ground with slippery mango skins. Turbaned Amazons, lost to the pandemonium, gazed a thousand miles away, chins on fists.

Noon in Port-au-Prince—whoo! what a sun! It felt like a flatiron dropped on my head. Though the ground was calcined to ash whiteness and the narrow houses, gray and sinister, swooned forward in the heat, here was an asbestos-footed boy trying to fly his kite. Hags in black, their charcoal bags now empty, rode up the hill on flop-eared donkeys. Life was not baked out of these streets by any means. At the Calvary the beggars reached out their tremulous bowls; and troubled girls, shoving petitions under the hot iron gate for the notice of the Saviour, paced back and

forth in the glare of the sun with tapers in their hands—one candle-power each, in that solar incandescence!

But the Lord has eyes for such pale lights I hope. When piety seems foolish, it is time to remember that our instructions are to be fools for Him. High Mass in the cathedral was in a less foolish vein, however, judging by earthly standards. I think especially of the music.

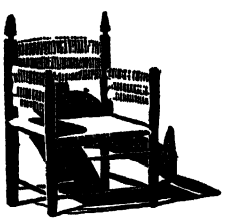
If there is anything about Protestantism that Catholics envy it is the congregational singing. Where Protestant churches were the first to be established in the islands, the Roman church has had to answer this craving in its converts—the black Catholics of the Bahamas sing hymns galore; "Onward Christian Soldiers" was the rouser to which the Gouyave Rosary Procession marched. But the wishes of Pius X, saintly and hopeful, were that all his children should return to vocal participation in the Roman liturgy and learn and sing its chants.

His encyclical on that subject has been a tough one to put in practice. Gregorian music poses subtle difficulties; but it is the old habit of silent listening (or not listening) that most resists change. In Port-au-Prince, however, I found the wish beginning to be fulfilled. At a distance like eternity in the vast, long, lofty, pale, glass-glittering cathedral, the priests officiated gorgeously at the altar, the space behind them filled with seminarians who gave the music a foundation. Yes, that choir was basic; the organ played a minor part. For though French Church organists, as a rule, pull the operatic from their instruments to the very gizzard, this Haitian, according to the Pope's desire, played shyly. It was the pale gold of a halo that he traced in behind the singing.

The real singers were the children. I suppose there were three hundred present. In the choir aisles the girls from the convent schools were ranged, each group with characteristic shoulder ribbons. In the nave aisles were the boys, their missals open in

their hands. Antiphonally the two large unloud choirs sang: now the girls in high-soaring silver arcs, now the boys, more huskily, in flowing figures like those blown by a slow wind across a field of grain. Neither group was perfect but both were great in their simplicity. The seminarians, meanwhile, mature voiced and more experienced, added the ballast of their cooperation like kindly uncles.

Such doings touched and pleased me. In mid-niggerdom the Pope's civilized dream was beginning to come true. When I looked about at the starched white clothes of my pew-mates, and the boys picking their noses and falling innocently to chanting when their turn came; and especially when I saw how these poor Christians knelt on the tile after the service, heads to one side wistfully, and arms wide-stretched to make the sign of the cross with their whole bodies, praying into the luminous deeps of that high-vaulted room—it was as if I were at Calabash Bay again, in the presence of religion at its most simplehearted.



Yet that morning's French clergy, filing out to a well-earned breakfast, must officially regard the Bay's Plymouth Brethren as no church at all; rather, as just so many poor fishermen deluding themselves with amateur theology. A curious opinion, in a way, when from a band of fishermen turned theological on the shores of Galilee had sprung their own Church's complex structure. Their full-grown giant oak of liturgy, relics, sainthoods, bishoprics, sacraments, indulgences, and costly architecture, had grown out of one such humble acorn of a beginning.

For an acorn's-eye view of the Roman tree, all I needed was to recall the Brethren's distrust of it. Such majestic branching they regarded as gingerbread and gimcrack, not only foreign to salvation's plan, but a satanic hindrance to its clear perception. Yet from the Anglican bough of the hoary veteran, for all its mistletoe, birds' nests, and fungus, their acorn of Plymouthism had dropped—with the germ of Christianity healthily alive inside it. It was the old tale again of age sadly finding youth a fool and youth grimly finding age a fogy.

But such similes lead a tombstone man astray. The Brethren, as if their church already were grown to treehood, have a few odd birds nesting in their hair. Bertha's song of Father Killam the Obea-man was not without significance. Charms are used in Pedro. Moreover, Pedro "set-ups" all but duplicate the wakes of Haiti—except that the Haitians more exactly know the purpose of these occasions. As good Catholics the Haitians watch to keep the Devil off; as good Voodooists they play cards and forfeits, tell tales, and sing ballads, because an unhappy spirit brings back unhappiness to the living, and it is wise, thus, to send him cheerful to the grave.

And meanwhile, as these wakes imply, the Haitian church is no ecclesiastical purebred but a double entity—two oaks baffingly intergrafted and with only one of its original acorns Christian. In the Port-au-Prince streets, often, or the markets, I had seen people in parti-colored clothing, shirts half red, half white, for instance. Such garments, or more elaborate patchworks, were for sale in all the poor folks' shops on the Grande Rue. In the cathedral none were visible; but, I wondered, were some perhaps hidden under this starchy show of white—tokens of penance prescribed by the Voodoo priests? For the other seed at the root of the double tree came from Africa.

All Haitians are Christians and nearly all of them are Cath-

olic; but a large part of these Catholics, in turn (the great peasant class, principally, and my shoeshine boy), are Voodooists to boot. Thus "holy pictures" serve a larger purpose than the Church intends. St. Anthony in his vow-of-poverty tatters is confused with Legba, ragged hobbling god of doors and crossroads. St. Patrick, thanks to his success with snakes, is identified with Damballa, the benign serpent god. Kneeling devoutly before the altar of the Mater Dolorosa, with arms outstretched and face full of piety, the Haitian may be winging her prayer to Gran' Erzilie, rich god of the long-dead.

But if Voodoo thus penetrates Catholicism, it is a mutual interpenetration. Its own rites and sacrifices are prefaced by the Pater Noster, Credo, Ave Maria, a long adoration, and longer benediction. The crucifix on the family altar is venerated as a symbol superior even to the egg and thunderstone—as Christ is to the other gods. At the ritual dances, drums that have been baptized with holy water are used, properly to induce frenzy: each drum has its Christian godfather and godmother. And after the sacrificial animals have been killed, and the gods have been fed, and the public dancing is ended, the very devotees who have been most possessed—who have burst through the roof thatch, wallowed in the river, or writhed in the agonies brought by Ti Kita Démembré, the joint-dislocating god—will be at Mass next morning wholeheartedly worshiping the Saviour.

It seems contradictory and, to non-Haitian Catholics, dreadful. But the Plymouth Brethren would say that if you address prayers to St. Anthony or the Mater Dolorosa you might as well add Legba and Gran' Erzilie to the list, all superstitions being on a par. Or to the true mountain Haitian, luxuriating in the huge pantheon of his double religion, the Roman half of it for all its princely pomp and claimed sufficiency must seem as partial, poor, and narrow, as the Brethren's church does to a right-thinking Catholic.

As for the *Old Creole Days* little girls next door, in their *Ladies' Book* Swiss chalet, probably they will never be touched by any religion but the one the good nuns explain to them in the Convent of St. Rose of Lima. Or perhaps they will. At Saut d'Eau, perhaps, after the throngs have come out from the festal vespers, and the lamps glitter through the darkening forest by St. John's holy springs, one of them may abruptly stagger, as the gods use her voice to prophesy in the dialects of Guinea. To a Haitian, religious experience can come as a nerve-shattering paroxysm.

But for pure wonder, a possession so terrific is no more wonderful than the knowledge of truth that changes the soul of some Calabash Bay fisherman. A word, a brightness in the sky—some such quiet clue is the final one to disclose salvation to him while he mends his nets. Almost shy, there it is: a truth as small, complete, and easily grasped as a brown acorn laid in his hand. For the miracle in these things is that they are living. Whether an oak is tree or acorn is a secondary matter—or whether a church is Plymouthism with one self-humbled God, full-flowering Romanism with its saints and lovely Virgin, or Voodooism with pantheon darkly vast.

The great thing, certainly, about religion in the West Indies (and it will be so, too, believe me, on any island of mine) is, that it is so much alive. In the Protestant islands it sets people to quoting Scripture on the streets and to singing hymns for social fun. In the Catholic islands it moves people in long processions and makes them kneel at shrines: I see the boatmen's saints again, watching on the rocks of the St. Lucian coast, and the Puerto Ricans, with brass bands and silver banners, worshiping out of doors on Corpus Christi day. In Haiti it rises up in seraphic chanting and bursts out in the heathen cacophony of drums.

But this thud of baptized drums wakened by sincerely pious hands—who are we to call it heathen? Isaac Watts is a babe of

hymnody; Gregory the Great lived only yesterday. Drums and dancing and blood sacrifices pleased Jehovah in the Old Dispensation. And before that, and before the days of islands, when the waters covered the earth, it was the cacophony of waves that rose to the changeless One's greater glory.

Chapter VIII.

THE CARRIAGE WAITED, THE POSTMAN was coming, and—thank heaven!—he had a letter for me. "Railway station please!" I called to the driver, and tore the letter open.

Dear Miss Smith, I read, while the carriage-top fringes flipped, and the driver jangled his chimes; *We are delighted to have you come to Blue Hole. Mr. Hairs, the plantation overseer, will meet you at the train. Cordially, Amy Taylor.*

"*Miss* Smith! She is expecting a lady!" I moaned, catching nervously at my bags. So this was the assurance of welcome for which I had waited! And how, with my moustache, was Mr. Hairs to recognize 'Miss Smith' in a crowd of strangers?

The lights of Montego Bay, at last that night, sparkled below in the dark; down the hot rails toward them the train came rattling. Of course the station platform was packed. I knew it would be. However, "You are Mr. Hairs?" I said to a tall man who didn't seem to be meeting anyone else, and Mr. Hairs it was.

"*Mr.* Smith!" cried a friendly lady in the back seat of the car, welcoming me and the bags. "Amy will be delighted! Women guests are such a bother. I know, because I have been one myself for ages. Your hostess has grown quite tired of me. In fact, I have been ready a week to go home to Cousins Cove; but how could we part until it had been settled which you were, a man or a woman?

Such an odd name, 'Glanville'; it had us no end puzzled. Rowland," she called to Mr. Hairs, "don't forget to honk at the gate. You see," she informed me, "if you turned out to be a man after all, we arranged to honk two longs and a short. Amy was too busy to come with us, but wanted a warning, so as to know which speech to recite as you came up the steps: she of course has had to prepare *two*. My own name," she finished, leaning back, "is Hay."

"I suspect I shall like Blue Hole," I told her in heartfelt relief. For this was my first short visit to the Tropics, now more than a few years ago, and Jamaica seemed very hot and foreign to the holiday-keeping tombstone man.

"It's a great place," said Mrs. Hay. "Something always up! New kittens this morning in Amy's wardrobe. And last Thursday it was an earthquake. Oh, what a fright we had! Amy and I fell into each other's arms; but Rowland, who is always so brave, said 'Be calm: it's the donkeys fallen from the hill to the dining-room roof.' You got them down, too, didn't you, Rowland," she went on, "even if one of them did take the gutter with him."

But here was the gate, and a Negro boy springing to open it. Two longs and a short! Here were the terrace steps between croton hedges, veranda steps hooded in blossoming jasmine, and Miss Taylor at the top to greet me. And here, no less grateful to the tired traveler, was the mosquito net drawn around me and the bed at last. Pussy had lit, no doubt of it, in catnip. It was like the arrival in Santísima Trinidad on my more recent and far rangier journey—one of those otherworldly lucky landings. And though I was no essayist at this date, industriously absorbing truth and falsehood, I learned so much at Blue Hole about the agreeable side of plantation life that I make a chapter of it.

The Blue Hole mornings invariably dawned fair and fine. First visitors were the humming birds, waiting for a touch of the sun to open new hibiscus flowers outside the windows. Then the tinkling-grackles would begin to tinkle. And the donkeys would make their daily experiment, leaning over the fence for a mouthful of bougainvillea blossoms to learn if they still were prickly.

My bedroom opened into a bath, the bath into a fern garden cut into the hillside, and that garden into the main flower garden at the side of the house; and since all the doors were always open, this was the way my friend Scamp came in, the plantation dog.

He was a big white kindly fellow, who every morning brought me some gift or other, a bit of coral, or a gaudy leaf pulled from the croton hedge. Pleased as Punch to be remembered, I would lift the mosquito net to let him in; whereupon he would drop his gift on my chest, then curl up on the foot of the bed, sigh, roll back his eyes for a loving look, and sink into a snooze.

Meanwhile the servants were beginning to stir. From the drawing-room into which my bedroom opened, came a noise between a whistle and a swish, and through the keyhole I spied the cause of it: Rhoda was polishing the floor with a half coconut husk. After this process, she perfected the gloss by planting her bare feet on two cloths and skating methodically to and fro.

At the same time "Lil the butler," as she was called, drew my bath. Miss Taylor had read somewhere that Americans take cold morning baths invariably, and a cold bath was what Lil the butler drew. The water was piped direct from a mountain spring; I couldn't bear the thought of getting into it.

However, it would never do openly to admit that I was a softy, unable to enjoy a cold plunge like a true American; for which reason it was my habit to splash awhile with one foot, then pull the plug, and so let the ice-water shoot out into the garden. To this day Lil the butler and Rhoda, whose ears no doubt were pressed

in horror to the far side of the palmwood wall, think that I actually took those baths.

In the tub one day—dry at the time—I found a lizard, doing his best to climb the porcelain side. Poor fellow, though he raced his legs so fast that they were invisible, he still got nowhere. I offered to help him with a towel, but his response to this was to pop down the drain.

More trustful was the toad, big as a flatiron, that lived under the tub. He was a wrinkled, peaceable, old customer. When, in the bright sunshine, I would set up the mirror in the fern garden door and shave, he sometimes would take half a jump and unclose the little jewels of his eyes. Or he'd turn his back and sleep. We made no demands upon each other and so got along very well.

Breakfast was at seven. The tropical day has a drowsy gap in the middle of it, and so must begin early. But the days at Blue Hole could not well be too long. I guessed that the first morning, when I looked down on the glistening coconut groves and sea.

Near at hand poinsettias flamed, allspice trees lifted towers of rich green. Ezekiel, the "boy," came and went with a tin on his head, watering the vegetable patch. In the common at the foot of the hill, where the cattle and goats grazed, the plantation laborers already were swinging their cutlasses, clearing the day's allotted acre of the shrubby growths that had sprung up since the last rains.

After breakfast my habit was to spend mornings at the cove. On some days, however, a norther blew from Cuba. When this happened the villagers bandaged their heads in flannel to keep the tooth-ache off, and I went not to the cove, but to the ragged coral shelf of Barbican, the next plantation, to watch the surf. The rocks were too sharp to sit on but I soon learned that a coconut husk eased that misery.

It was a rousing performance. The waves piled up, and exploded into sheaves of diamonds, and churned, and spouted, and fell back in shawls of foamy lacework. Nor could I help admiring the crabs

that sat calmly in the most exposed places and took all that buffeting. No shock could ruffle their dour decorum. They put me in mind of the Texas outlaw, who was so tough that in the electric chair he blew out the fuse.

Usually, however, mornings were serene. Under the veranda hung a stem of ripe bananas from which Scamp, who was very neat about it, was permitted to help himself. I had the same privilege, and would fill my pockets when ready to trudge down to the cove.

Before I had come to Jamaica I had formed a happy idea of the place. The St. Ann's waterfalls were old stamp-album friends; there was *Tom Cringle's Log*; and in *The Sea and the Jungle* I had read that the island was a jewel that smelled like a flower. But I had not guessed that I should have a cove of my own to revel in, like this.

There was a crescent of beach, with coconut trees leaning over it, and sea-grape trees with leathery round leaves just right for picnic plates. There were ramparts of coral rock at the two ends to dive from, with the wickerwork of mangroves beyond, where crabs went climbing. There was a pelican standing guard and a reef to keep the sharks out.

In the arms of a crooked sea grape I played the mouth organ, ate bananas, and read Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As reading, this was not very up-to-date, and while I was at it the world's problems went unsolved. Still, it suited: when I looked up from those hot and hard old stories, sometimes so beautiful, oftentimes so barbarous, and saw the palm leaves glint and the sea swell shoreward in long turquoise undulations, and the white coral rock burning in the sun, I would stretch my figleaf-naked self and startle the pelican with a classic blast on the harmonica.

On the cove sands lay a dugout canoe that I was free to use. Since an old Greek from Minnesota is never so much at home as when he has a paddle in his hand, I spent plenty of time afloat, following the shore or striking out to sea. But the reef gave me

the freshest pleasure. Blissfully, hours at a time, I cruised over it rubbernecking.

Excitement heats me to this day when I remember those sand-paved caverns, fenced around with mustard-colored elkhorns, gigantic moss-green cauliflowers, lilac-tinted tubes—where the dissolving gray of weightless sea-feathers nodded, and sea-fans fanned in nets of burning purple. Pink anemones beamed, fantastic fish swam in and out in schools like movable bright beds of flowers.

Sometimes the flying fish, like silver bullets, would come in about the canoe, ricocheting on the glassy water with the sound of a fountain. Or a Portuguese-man-o'-war would drift by, a clear blue gelatinous bubble as big as your fist, with a clear pink-jelly frill on top, inflated to make a sail.

But by eleven the sea breeze was lolloping in. It was time for a swim and then for luncheon.

COCONUT HUSKING

After lunch, a nap, and then came tea.

In the West Indies the Negroes think it a burden to carry things in their hands. They prefer to balance them on their heads. At first when a woman came down the street with a writing desk in that position I had set people to laughing by asking, "Is she a public stenographer?" But now I had got used to seeing the school children with their books up there, and the laundresses with their

clothesbaskets, or even a boy going to post a letter with a rock on top of it to keep it from blowing off. Even so, when Lil the butler would clap the tea tray on her head, and skip for the kitchen, I never ceased to be surprised.

A Jamaican tea is something to brag about. Wistfully I recall the cashew biscuits, the crisp buttery lacework of cassava wafers. And since Blue Hole was a plantation where two hundred thousand nuts were harvested every year, coconut cake was a luxury Miss Taylor frequently could afford. After all this, however, I really could not do justice to the delights of dinner unless I went mountain climbing first.

The house, as Mrs. Hay's story of the earthquake had forewarned me, was built into a hillside. This made for safety in a hurricane, and indeed the old house more than once had had to stand that chief of West Indian scourges. Miss Taylor liked to recall one storm when the piano blew out the front door with a rumble and a pop, which ended her music lessons forever. But Jamaican hills are likely to be mountains, and such they were at Blue Hole. Thus I could go mountain climbing after tea as readily as I went reef cruising after breakfast, and every day I did it. Sometimes Mrs. Hay would grasp a stick and come along.

A favorite climb was the Mango Walk. The path to the heights on which the villagers grew shallots and yams and cocoa lilies in a cooler altitude, led through steep groves of mangoes and bamboos and came out grandly into the open gardens at last. On the way I would meet people coming down with yams they had dug. "Respects to you, my master!" would boom a stately Negro woman, curtsying in spite of the heavy basket on her head; her bright turban and dark cutlass would make her look most picturesque. Upon hearing such a greeting the little Northern republican would beam with pleasure.

Near the ridge top was a spring in a hollow of the rock with maidenhair ferns around it. This made my destination. Sitting

there to catch my wind, I would look down into the golden afternoon world, past the cocky plumes of the breadfruit trees, feather-duster bamboo clumps, and dense balls of mango greenery to the coconut flats by the sea, and watch the steamers, blunt and busy, and the white sails of beautiful becalmed sailing ships.

It was a peaceable world, and better still its peaceableness seemed a part of myself. My soul, usually just of the peanut size, swelled out in pygmy grandeur, and all the dear works of the Creator, spread out so beautifully below, filled it with calm and happiness.

At dinnertime would come a sudden sunset; the mountains blackened, the clouds turned a dreadful red. In the silence all at once the lapping of waves would rise to us from the black sands of Barbican Bay. But distant sounds soon were smothered in the thick din of night insects. The Muscovy ducks, heads under wings, slept perched on the cannons sunk in the terrace turf. No piratical surprises these nights to set that old battery to barking!

The tropical darkness descended with a rush, overwhelming, velvet-black. But in the middle of it, bravely gay, was our veranda dinner table with its old silver and flowered china, fringed napkins standing in the glasses, little nosegays of hibiscus and jasmine, and beaming lamp. Strange moths flitted overhead, praying mantises jumped into the salad, but nobody minded. Mr. Hairs sat at my left, Miss Taylor carved at my right. Opposite sat Mrs. Hay, looking humorous, and Mrs. Rankine, Miss Taylor's aunt.

Mrs. Rankine, years before, after a long life of industry and self-sacrifice had decided to grow old. So she shrank down to the mosquito size and lost her wits, and never afterward bothered to do a tap of work or talk sensibly. From her own plantation in the mountains her bed had been fetched, a huge black structure in native mahogany, carved with pineapples and scrolls, in whose company she was perfectly content. She teased the public with very strange sewing and said cryptic things in a merry voice, and

in general lived a life of mysterious privacy. But she liked the American visitor well enough and enjoyed being winked at now and then. And though she never said much herself at table, she laughed more gaily than anybody when one of the rest of us was witty.

Mrs. Hay was full of puns and drolleries. After she had said something especially good, she had a habit of covering her face with her hand in mock embarrassment; but since one finger was lost from that hand she could peep through slyly and enjoy our laughter. For all her puns, however, she lived a life of sadness. Her husband, who had been a hospitable, princely sort of man, was dead; their daughter, who was a beauty, had gone away to New York; and her plantation Cousins Cove was falling to ruin.

She left Blue Hole before I did. I shall never forget the night ride when we took her home, now humping over a white bridge with the sea rushing in beneath, now skirting a bay where the fishermen brandished enormous flaming torches on the rocks. Never did anything make night so black, as those Negroes' torches. Then here was Cousins Cove at last, with the dogs in their rapture jumping on the dining table.

But it was a far, lonely, decrepit place to leave that good Scotswoman, and so I am glad to say that she came back to Blue Hole the following Tuesday. Miss Taylor craved company, too; and in Jamaica, as was true in our own Old South, plantation visitors come often and stay a long time.

Mr. Hairs was a quiet man, whose British habit of speaking without moving his lips was exaggerated to a point where I could understand but little of what he said. But he was very patient about repeating, and about instructing me in the names of things. "It's a Betsy-kickup, that bird," he would say, and break into a smile, for the darky names he thought very funny. He was at home on a horse and wore the oldest, droopiest, most comfortable hat you can imagine.

Coconut day was his busy day as it was Mrs. Rankine's. She stood on the veranda watching the sale and murmuring, "Coc'nut, coc'nut," and nodding and smiling, while he, down below, dickered with the dozen buyers. It was the same, I suppose, in pimento time, when the allspice berries had been dried on the sun "barbecues," and were ready to dispose of. But at noon the sale was over. He would retire into his office under the steps; and the buyers, each man with a fire of his own down by the old breeze mill, would cook their dozen lunches of yams and fish.

Of Miss Taylor's qualities as a hostess it is a pleasure to speak. She was easy, entertaining, and thoughtful. But sometimes she was a bit absent-minded, as you will understand when I tell you how her bathing suit was lost. We were all going to Orchard, three or four plantations away, to swim; there was the hulk of a wrecked steamer lying on the beach to dress in, and it was going to be a frolic.

But when all was ready Miss Taylor's suit was gone. Not ten minutes before it had lain on a chair where several of us had seen it. Now it was nowhere, as exhaustive search proved. Even Scamp was accused of having run off with it. Poor Miss Taylor was desperate until Rhoda gasped: "Lord a-matty, Miss Amy! You got it on!" Sure enough, she had put it on under her frock to make changing simpler when we got to the beach.

Thus it was the aptness rather than the absent-mindedness of her remark at dinner one evening that made it memorable. We were having roast pig—the Blue Hole porkers, by the way, are fed on breadfruit, coconut, and bananas—and midway through the meal she turned to me and politely murmured, "Won't you have more of the filling, Mr. Stuffing?"

At this, in a paroxysm, Mrs. Hay retired behind her four-fingered hand; Mrs. Rankine fetched out a high cackle; and Mr. Hairs, who seldom got beyond a mournful grin, had to laugh too.

"Mr. Stuffing" was my name henceforward at Blue Hole and I never bothered to be undeserving of it.

Miss Taylor, in fact, had sensed from the first that, devoted though I might be to the dear dishes of the dear homeland, what I wanted in Jamaica was Jamaican dishes. So she sent her ranger into the bush for native fruit, star apples with purple flesh, rusty brown naseberries, granadillas whose seeds I drank in their own liquor, soursops for sherbet.

There was cocoa-bud soup and pumpkin soup, fried plantain, steamed breadfruit, akee-on-toast. There were stuffed chochos and delicious fish brought on the run fresh every noon from Barbican Bay; guava or cashew fruit preserves, and puddings made of sweet potatoes and ginger. There was coconut water in a tall pitcher with a weighted lace cover over the top, and coffee from the Blue Mountains. And the way I not merely sampled but gorged upon all these good things earned very legitimately the name Miss Taylor's slip of the tongue had given me.

After dinner the mail would be brought by William, who came whistling in the dark. Letters I seldom got, and so I would beg to be excused and walk down to the sea.

At Blue Hole the night world in some ways is more beautiful than the world by day. When a leaf falls from a coconut tree, as constantly happens, it is fifteen feet long and a yard wide and so makes something of a blot on the lawn. But at night you do not see it, whereas the palm leaves overhead, in crisp silhouette, look finer than ever. I soon became an ardent coconut palmist and would stand enraptured under a not-too-tall tree, with the wigwam of its lattice about me and the stars blinking through above—until the sound of a ripe nut dropping from some other

tree would pull my head into its collarbone and send me into the open on the jump.

Beyond the gate was the bridge. Blue Hole's blue hole is a spring, actually of an agate color;* and from it a surprisingly large stream flows through banks of watercress and Job's-tears to the sea.

In the daytime, in the water by the bridge, stand the Negro women of Barbican and Sandy Bay, doing their washing. Miss Taylor regarded the custom as most uncouth, but immemorial use had established it as their British right before she was born, so she could do nothing to alter matters.

The girls' skirts were certainly tucked high. "Oh, what a pretty gentleman! Good enough to eat!" they would call when I went by. Or, "Wonder why gentleman don't carry a cane?" Then they would smack their wet clothes and laugh uproariously.

But at night the stream and the bridge were as still as a grave. If a Negro did come riding on his mule, he would wheel in fright at the glimmer of my white trousers, before calling a relieved "Evening, sir!"

Beyond the bridge was a palmy bit of shore, neat and narrow: here I walked. It was the dark of the moon, there was no horizon, the stars overhead ran down into new mirrorwise constellations under my feet while I paced on this shelf among them. On such nights, or even more when the moon returned and swamped the world in radiance, there would be music from across the water. Sandy Bay would fall to singing.

Sandy Bay is no great place, but it is enough bigger than Calabash Bay to boast a post office. When I bought stamps there, the postmistress would put down the gungo-peas she was shelling and pass the time of day.

Above her office and bedroom was the district court, a bare

* Jamaica's more famous "Blue Hole" is a cove in the coast near Port Antonio, of a blue genuinely vivid.

clean place where Mrs. Hay and I one day heard a Negro arraigned for "furious driving." Thirty-five miles an hour had been his speed, but he had come around a corner on the wrong side which had caused the mischief. His witness, a healthy black boy, kissed the Bible with a report like a pistol shot, whereupon the Irish inspector, to whom things Jamaican were as new as they were to me, could not help laughing, even though he was seated by the magistrate. And when the trial was over, here were the children outside, screaming their multiplication tables under a soursop tree, and the fishermen bringing in their catch.

But at night Sandy Bay broke out in music. On a palm log I would sit and listen.

First there would be drum music, big drum and tom-tom contrasting their slow and rapid rhythms; this soon passed into a grand vocal concert of Moody and Sankey hymns. Stanza upon stanza, the tramp, tramp, tramp of chords would march across the mirror of the sea, rich, swelling, and full. One night a fisherman setting his nets between the singers' side of the bay and mine, unseen and alone on the starlit water, invented melodies of his own and wove them into the village harmony.

In a word, here were doings of exactly the kind I hope for on my island—except, of course, that I was a listener rather than a participant. No, these singers were my inferiors, with whom for the good of the delicately-balanced Blue Hole world it was not well for the white guest to mix. Mr. Hairs—and he and I were one, here, in a sense—bought their labor as he needed it, gave orders or was patronizing from on horseback, and collected the rent; while they tilled their hilltop fields communally and washed clothes at the plantation gate.

But a well-balancing world is something to admire; if honor lay on one side and mere numbers on the other, it was nice to be where honor was my inherent portion. Nor did I find anything to mar the tenor of those Blue Hole days.

But they ended at last, of course. We breakfasted gloomily indoors that morning. Cooped in the dining room, with the ladles and blue finger glasses glowering from the sideboard, I felt the end already upon me. Mrs. Rankine had got up in the middle of the night to be present, and put on her best dress.

Here were the servants, Rhoda and Lil the butler, Ezekiel and William, and the cook whom I had seldom seen but to whom I was most indebted of any—all wishing me health, good fortune, and a speedy return, while the jasmine leaves over their heads began to show color in the first chilly light of morning. Good-by! good-by! And off I rode.

The next letter I got from Miss Taylor began, not *Dear Miss Smith*, but *Dear Mr. Stuffing*. It told how Scamp, the day after this departure, had come in with a hunk of coral in his mouth as usual. But then he saw the bed empty and was disgusted and dropped the coral with a thump. Then he went out through the fern garden, down through the big garden, and so under the veranda and ate a banana.

When I was in Jamaica again, on this more recent journey of mine, I hustled out to Blue Hole very promptly: one of a traveler's pleasures is the return to scenes no longer strange. The place certainly seemed homelike—here was old Scamp at the top of the steps, and Miss Taylor, Ezekiel, and the rest. Only Mrs. Rankine, more mysterious in her fun than ever, had gone away; she had left the green isle where old age had been so happy, for the surer and even kindlier serenities of heaven.

Chapter IX.

IN MY ISLAND I INTEND TO LEAD THE active life. There is too much of the Anglo-Saxon in me, or maybe it is the Devil, to accept the Blue Hole kind of indolence unless I have partly earned it. But whereas in Cold Spring it would seem I must await a serene and carpet-slippery old age to read Parson Woodforde's *Diaries* entire, or compose a sonata for the neighbor children's toy piano, on my island I shall revel in these enterprises in the prime of life, confident that such moral duties as spading cow manure into the garden won't suffer in consequence. In the small orbit of island life, that is, I hope really to be able to tend to business.

William Thornton of old Tortola was an islander whose life was a model. Even the time he wasted I'm sure he wasted with a will—it could hardly have been for want of more positive plans.

Tortola is the chief island of the British Virgins; the Thornton estate was Pleasant Valley. When William came to his inheritance he was newly married, a young man trained as a physician. But the cares of managing an estate and of practicing medicine did not drain away the energies of our hero, nor did the delights of wedlock, nor the disciplined enthusiasms of religion (he was a Quaker). No, for his soul's private exercise he evolved a system of philology, *Cadmus, or the Elements of Written Language;* and to top all off, in his rustic retreat he sat down and designed the United States' capitol building.

What bliss! Private fun became a public wonder: though he reached Philadelphia too late to enter his design in the competition that Jefferson had advertised, it was so much better than those punctually received that the latter were all thrown out. He won the $500 and the Washington city lot.

Tortola never saw Thornton after this; he stayed to organize the Patent Office, to breed race horses, and enchant society with his conversation, and so died a mainlander after all. It seems a pity. I wish he had come back to Pleasant Valley. Tortola, it is, that remembers him: the mainland has forgotten the amazing amateur. And since familiarity with legislative bodies breeds contempt, we have grown to regard the domed legislative building he invented as something of a fraud. Our newest state capitols are office buildings frankly—hives for job holders. But in Thornton's day the republican process of government was still touched with its early sublimity, and his expression of this in a dome was a masterstroke. The other New World capitol builders, from Minnesota to the Argentine, copied it for a hundred years.

Thornton arrived on the mainland with his title to greatness already earned. As a rule, however, the West Indies' famous men have left their islands before accomplishing the work that was to make them notable. Alexander Hamilton (of Nevis) was an infant prodigy in St. Croix where he spent his boyhood, but it was in American fiscal affairs that he won his fame. Brion, Bolívar's admiral, helped free not his native Curaçao but the South American states. Born in Haiti, Audubon painted North American birds. Born in St. Thomas, Pissarro, the genial "Dutch uncle" of the Impressionists, painted French landscapes. The twin-named poets of Santiago de Cuba, José María Heredia, and José-Maria de Heredia, both became naturalized mainlanders—de Heredia a Frenchman, the great master of the French sonnet, Heredia a Mexican.

The Spanish-writing Heredia, however, is a special case. He

was a political exile; enforced absence from still colonial Cuba made him only the more passionately Cuban. This luminary among Latin-American poets belongs, rather, on the list of West Indians of international consequence who were islanders forever—with Finlay the Cuban bacteriologist who first accused the mosquito of carrying yellow fever; with Hostos the Puerto Rican, so valuable to the cause of Latin-American education that the first locomotive to chuff across the Andes was named in his honor; or with black Toussaint of Haiti, almost legendary as soldier and statesman, and the West Indies' chief native-born hero of any color.*

Since it is too late now for me to be born an islander myself, I take special interest in the lives of mainlanders who have gone to the isles to unfold their talents:—Ponce de León, or Rodney, or (less illustrious but, to me, more inspiring) Bryan Edwards, the opening chapter of whose history of the British islands is a classic of geographical prose writing. And because his aptitudes like my own are still more curious and minor, it is pleasant to think of the robed and earringed figure of the old Jew, Lopez Laguna, safe at last under a Jamaican fig tree after the long horror of the Inquisition, translating King David's psalms into the "redondilos, quintilos, terzettos, decimes, madrigals, and romances" of his *Faithful Mirror of Life*. What setting like an island for a labor at once so daffy and so delicious?

Robb White, not yet immortal so far as I know, was an even more pertinent example. I looked at him with care while we rode out to Tortola together on the mail boat. With short hair bleached by the sun and tanned cheerful visage, he made a very wholesome picture of an escapist.

Marina Cay was his and his wife's hermitage. He had bought it entire—beach, rocks, and all—for the price of a good overcoat,

* One other Haitian general deserves mention—the mulatto Alexandre Dumas,—not because of island renown, but because of the family he reared in France: Dumas *père* was his son, Dumas *fils* his grandson.

and since he would never need an overcoat now he really had got it for nothing, so you might say. It was the perfect home for a writer of children's books to work in.

However, it was not yet his actual address. The cost of building something more than a grass hut on a far reef-guarded scrap of Arcady was appalling; he had just been to St. Thomas to inquire about it. No; but if the ultimate insularity of Marina Cay was yet in prospect he already knew the island life. At Seacow Bay, Tortola, he had been busy over his manuscripts for some time. Both he and his wife—a vigorous girl who made the native Tortolians gasp by climbing for coconuts as if she were a boy—liked fishing and sailing and photographing birds. *And* there were duties. "When other fun gives out, we can always scrape the cistern," he added gamely; for though Tortola was a far larger island than his own, it was still too small to provide underground sources of fresh water to tap with a well.

Talk like this made my island seem both more possible and more impossible. About us, meanwhile, as the launch plowed through the radiant waters of Pillsbury Sound, were islands near, neat, and uninhabited. I'd have given an overcoat for any one of them.

Presently we skirted St. John with its bright coves and wilderness of green hills: a cherry-red roof or a stone tower poked above the trees for an occasional reminder that man is master of the planet. And then through the steep gorge of the mountainous Narrows we swung, and so into the West Indies' grandest seaway, Sir Francis Drake Channel.

What a setting for a fleet of Elizabethan ships, lanterned, high-pooped, rich-bepennoned! Drake had a sense of the picturesque, sailing this hidden way to the siege of Puerto Rico. Yet in this same obscure world of brine and hill it was, in the tranquillity of his study ashore, that Thornton wrote *Cadmus* and designed his

capitol: to the north, with bush slopes gilt-edged by the day's last sunshine, lay Tortola, the Isle of Doves.

Robb White was not the sole mainlander for whom Tortola was a haven. The hotel had been taken over by one who occupied all three rooms as a means of guarding his privacy; for, as he told me, if there was anything he detested it was the American tourist. Since this was what both of us were, it was surprising to have him look me up a second time to enlarge on the theme, but after that I managed to elude him.

It was Mistress Jennings who took care of me. As if putting my Matanzas student's welcome into literal practice in Road Town, she moved out of her house and let me have it. I suppose she slept in the kitchen, a rickety shed propped up among the crab holes; it was Orwin who slept in the pantry—her nephew and a being no less kind.

The bedroom was next the street and was painted Indian red. In time I ceased to notice the mosquitoes much, and could squirm inside the net without leaving an inch gap anywhere about me. The parlor was painted brown, and on a table, in a dish, were the postcards that Mistress Jennings had received to date. Behind this was the dining room, painted blue.

I think of the dining room most fondly. Into it Orwin would bound in his khaki shorts, bearing a pot of coffee that tasted like cough medicine or a platter from which a much-peppered fish stared up dolefully. It was the Creole diet complete, and after a

day of footing the island's trails I could do it justice. While I was at this, Orwin would sit in the pantry, Bible on bare knees, chanting psalms in a private but resonant darky voice; then to the kitchen he would gallop to fetch pineapple slabs for a dessert.

Mistress Jennings not only plied the guest with her best recipes, but set the table as if every day were Sunday. Her silver sugar bowl had a dove for its lid handle, which bird seemed a symbol of the place: *tórtola* is the Spanish word for "turtle dove." While Orwin resumed his poetry and I began my fruit, it was easy to fall to thinking of the outdoor doves I had learned to know. For though the mongoose, that gimlet-toothed rascal brought from India to prey on cane-field rats, had stayed to prey on the ground-nesting birds instead, doves were still the islands' commonest feathered creatures. I thought of the tobacco doves especially, so gregarious, with a lining of burnt orange under their rattling wings.

Then my thoughts would roam away to the hummingbirds, and how they proved Pliny's saying (as one of the first writers on the Caribbees exclaimed), that Nature's least works are her greatest. Tobago's dude, the king-of-the-woods, had kindly showed his Joseph's coat for my benefit; in Curaçao the parakeets in strident flocks had wheeled over the Fuik Bay lignum vitaes. And in Jamaica, on Catherine's Peak, while I ate ham sandwiches for breakfast, the solitaire had chanted his slow crystalline melody from a fog-drenched thicket: once and for all, that morning, the false notion I had brought to the tropics was dispelled—that no tropical bird can sing.

The bird music most noteworthy in the islands, however, is made by the crowing cocks. Road Town boasted the usual brass band, but it was a lady of the breed, there, that was my special interest.

Across the street from Mistress Jennings's and near enough to hit with a peashooter was the house inhabited by this hen and

her mistress. It was a house with two front doors, one gaping into mid-air, and over the sill of this false door the lady sold a penny's worth of salt or plantains now and then or argued a point of divinity. Did "eternal" in Bible use, for instance, signify a longer period than "everlasting"?

Between trade and such chitchat Mistress Audley was always occupied. So was her hen, anchored near by with a piece of iron. The hen had chicks, there was eating to do to educate them in the process—not a moment could be lost. Thus, when rain threatened and the iron was picked up to lead her home, she squawked bloody murder. Hereupon my neighbor, seating herself on the steps of the real front door, would first deliver a short lecture on obedience, then turn her pet over on her lap and spank her.

When the rain fell that Mistress Audley's old eyes had foreseen, the mountaintops would disappear, and even the near-by coconut trees turned to silver. It was a poor time for business but good for hymns: with hen fluffed up at her feet to keep the chicks from damp, she would sit in the other doorway and sing in big, thrilling, lonesome tones.

Living at Mistress Jennings's, in fact, gave me opportunity to enjoy the noises of a not-white, poor, island neighborhood. At home in Cold Spring the tombstone man is muffled all day in the grate of saws on granite, and at night the radio makes a ceaseless background for conversation. But this was like my imagined island, where the only mechanical sound was the whirr of a sewing machine or two, briskly treadled.

No chugging hearse sped the Road Town deceased to the cemetery: plank coffins were carried by, by faithful friends. With scuffle of feet and swinging canes, wedding processions came along and the parson clattered away to pay sick calls on his pony. The town's traffic problem, in fact, was the tethering on market days of such mounts as his.

From the sea, conch-shell hoots announced the approach of fishing boats with their catch for sale. The hill gardeners strode by, heads laden with produce, bantering one another, or airing grievances. And while I stretched out on the gallery to digest my food, the neighbor women broke the day's round of argument, scolding, singing, and laughter, to knock on the pantry door and hand in specimens of their needlework.

Compared with the famous drawn work of Saba, Tortola's can only be called rustic. And since like this other island's it is done half for pastime and thus only half professionally, the industry is picayune indeed compared with Puerto Rico's. But the surprise of finding such things available gave them value: I was a generous customer, and could be—prices suited my wrinkled wallet to a T. To this day, when I carve the roast at home, the juice that flies is caught on a carver's cloth of Road Town manufacture.

It was puzzling to guess how the skill to make this Spanish drawn work, and doilies laced intricately within circles of pins had taken root; but Mistress Jennings had the explanation. The Beef Island planter's lady was the author of it—a Belgian who had lived in Mexico. While I listened to the story of her kindliness, a new doily showing its pattern on each knee, evening settled with equal kindliness on the little town. Pomegranates swung on their wiry twigs, crabs sidled up cautiously from their holes, the boys could be heard in the distance hollering at their game of tops. Very likely old Thornton would have found it hard to recognize the place: the island's hero had ridden this way in its most prosperous age. But the one street, long since robbed of its architecture by storm and riot, looked content in the humbler phase, of cabins nestling among broken masonry.

An island change had come over the needlework, too, no doubt. The lacemakers of old Spain or Belgium would probably have disowned it. So, likewise, while Chippendale worked that new wood, mahogany, that the West Indies were shipping north,

island cabinetmakers planed away in the belief that they were copying Old World models. But unconscious ignorance gave them a secret liberty. The four-poster beds and console tables that they made had a character that was new. Bolder in form than the originals and more peasantlike, they were "Colonial" with a tropical difference. Mrs. Rankine's bed at Blue Hole was the epitome of the style. As for Haiti's armchairs, the most comfortable on earth, though they had been copied from a French provincial type to begin with, recopying had made them Creole at last to their deep straw bottoms.

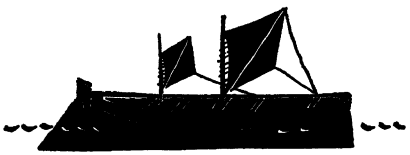
But if the skills of these cabinetmakers and needlewomen harked back to Europe, basketry carried forward a native trade. The islands' most famous baskets, even now, in fact, are made by the remnant of the Caribs in Dominica—stout, handsome, and rainproof to suit the Caribbees' wet climate.

Palm-leaf bags that close with a flap I had seen were typical of Grenada, double lidded arm baskets, of Haiti; as for the profusion of shapes that lure tourist money in Nassau, Kingston, or Port-au-Prince, they showed what wealth of invention was possible to the Negro weavers. And who can remember the grace of the hat weavers' hands at work, or the gay way the colored people wear their hats, without a pang of homesickness for the palmy places?

Then there were boats to think about, while Road Town's beacon burned less and less ineffectually in the gathering dusk; for in an island world where such craft are a homely commonplace, their color and shape and rigging take on local flavor. If I had guessed at the outset of my journey that every port, almost, was to have its nautical peculiarities, I would have kept a record of them to systematize on my own island at last, for a chore to justify the retired existence.

But now it was too late to begin. While the tide lapped up

among the mangroves behind the kitchen, recollection roved back to Havana's aquamarine-painted fishing fleet, and to the scoop-nosed dugouts of Jamaica, rowed cross-handed because of their narrowness—Santo Domingo's piraguas, because still slimmer, were all the more evidently hollow logs. And then the canoes of the Caribbees proper came to mind—the Apperly boys' boat in Dominíca, for instance, with its Carib-style advancing stem, or the dugout that Antoine and his friends were making in Gouyave.



CARIB CANOE

"Antoine and his friends"—here very likely was the formula to keep an island's industry wholesome. The boats and baskets and bedsteads I had been thinking of, and the needlework, were made by groups of intimates jabbering at their work, on beach or under mango tree, or on galleries like this one of Mistress Jennings's.

The convent workshops in San Juan were a step removed from the ideal, perhaps, but the girls embroidering like mad there had their social fun. The Camagüey saddlers were great singers; and the cigar-makers of Havana, busy in high, leaf-scented rooms, listened to yellow-backed novels read aloud by their hired readers. Only in the sugar mills, where machines made both the racket and the sugar, were gossip and improvised variations in technique wholly out of place.

But even cane grinding can be sociable, and Tortola was the place to show me this. The mill at Newtown, around the bay, was perhaps too primitive, but if the methods used in it were laborious, the work done, the shed itself, and the rum that was the final product, all were the peasants' own—as was also the big

roisterous party, noisy with conch-shell toots, that marked the season's end.

Housebuilding at Newtown was no less neighborly. Guitar-playing well-wishers lay helpfully in the shade, to mix music with the concrete; other friends lent a hand in more practical effort. And the infant onlookers caught rides to the beach if they could (or ran along anyhow) when the colony's one motor vehicle, a has-been truck, panted down for sand.

Tortola's fieldwork I found being done to music: bush clearing, planting, and yam digging could be a game, it was plain, if a group went at it in time with a strong-rhythmed song. The solo remarks bawled out with yoohooing chorus of brief reply that I stopped to hear on the trail to Brewers' Bay, were for all the world like the work songs of the Haitian mountaineers. And well might the singers be equally loud lunged. Their forefathers, too, had hustled the white landlords from their island: the last they saw of them was a comical bottom view as they shinnied over a ridge to boats and safety. It was an unsanguinary rout—after which the hard, self-helpful, African mode of doing things prevailed, and the colony ceased to be much of a jewel in the British crown.

Well, I grudged these people nothing. Recollection of Blue Hole's hilltop fields meanwhile rose to mind, in whose tillage, though it had been allied for two centuries with plantation capitalism, a communal scheme of work full-bloodedly survived. Wonder of wonders, the two systems were compatible. These more truly free Tortolians, however, were both less obsequious and less pert than the plantation tenants. I liked their unself-conscious self-respect.

I also liked the hill world they cultivated. The field-checkered slopes up which the path had toiled, smoothed away now into turfy uplands. Wind-carved shrubs were massed handsomely

around huge rocks. Behind me glinted Sir Francis Drake Channel, with its far battlement of islands; ahead lay the ocean, with the trade wind blowing in. What a day! What a world! I let loose a loud yoohoo of my own; but wished, for full kinship with the place, that I were in still older and fewer clothes, singing at work with my island neighbors.

At bay level, in another hour, I could still hear the hills' echoing refrains: from over a shoulder of rock and the high woods above, down came the far-off cadence. But there was nearer music to catch my ear. Under a tree lolled a minstrel-Uncle Remus, with a circle of listeners about him.

He was an old man named Penn. Where the sickle of beach died at the bay's cliff boundary, his boat was moored ready to take a load of charcoal. And here the sacked charcoal was, ready to be taken. He should have been loading it, I suppose, and returning ambitiously to Road Town to nail his profits. Perhaps his thought was, however, that he could grow little poorer or more tattered if he knocked off for the afternoon, and spun out the tales and riddles and ballads of which his old pumpkin of a head was so rattling-full.

At any rate this was what he was doing. Against the beach-top almond tree he lounged, wrinkled, leathery, and beaming, with a donkey tethered to a low bough at his side. The audience sat on the coal sacks, four or five boys and four or five girls, all as tattered and merry as himself.

For a white unknown to join such a party is normally the ruin of it. But somehow I joined this one. Was I invisible, for pity's sake? No, they shared with me the good time they were having. It was as if Haroun al Raschid, in one of his luckiest disguises, were learning first-hand what the talk was in the bazaars.

I hope Haroun better understood low Arabic than I did Mr. Penn's Creole English. It was insular to an extreme. The poetry,

too, ran on into an unbooky French and Spanish that left me even more blank, though the children, ignorant but polylingual, kicked up their feet higher at these drolleries than any. But Cowper's "Wreck of the Royal George" was a relief to the ear; and after all I caught a fair part of the ballads about the bad girls of Macorís and other ports, which songs' accompaniment he pantomimed on an imaginary fiddle.

No sooner was one song done than the audience called for more. Especially the rowdy were in request: these made everybody topple off his coal sack, while the donkey, seeming to share a taste for the lewd vocabulary, drew his lips back and fell to braying.

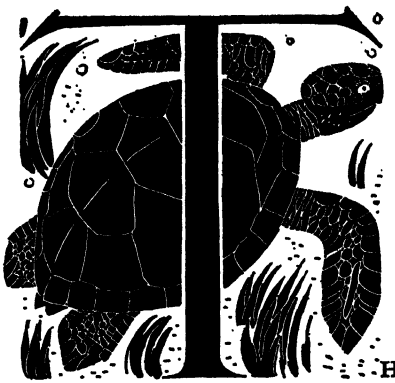
Truth must have it that his bray was little more raucous than their pink-mouthed laughter, and Mr. Penn's old voice was the reverse of sweet. Yet while I plodded back to Road Town, with coal marks like a pair of black sun-glasses worn astern, it all seemed musical enough in retrospect. The work songs echoing so hauntingly from the fields must also have had their ugliness at close hand and stanzas not fit to print. But, far or close, the music was graced with authenticity. It had grown out of the place itself and was as natural in it, and as unabashed, as the tobacco doves just flown up from the path ahead.

I thought affectionately of the birds; they were sociable like good islanders. Tortola did not soar high enough into the blue to please the solitaire, that recluse that must have a ferny dew-drenched mountain peak of his own to sing on. But having thought this, I thought affectionately of him too. Old Thornton, the darling of the wittiest New World society of his time, was as gregarious as a dove, yet there was something of the solitaire in the man. In privacy he wrote *Cadmus* and designed his capitol.

The island to keep an eye open for, I judge, is one with a pinnacle lonely enough for a solitaire's nest, from which the ocean is visible in full immensity. But there must be a snug cove beach

for the building of our boats, and hedged gardens whose cow dung is spaded in to music. And well-worn paths between, of course, where the doves flutter up when we come along, then settle again to lean against one another, and gurgle, and proceed with life's enterprise in company.

TURTLES AND POSTAGE STAMPS



Chapter X.

THERE IS NO NEED OF MY REPORTING at this time that the English are a maritime nation; it is a truth accepted with a yawn. Still, one proof of the fact is curious enough to bear remark, namely, that several of the things to eat and drink that we regard as most English are no produce of England at all, but of places removed from it by long ships' journeys.

The port laid down by "thoughtful baronets" is fetched from Portugal. Oranges, for marmalade, come from Jaffa or Valencia. Tea on its travels to the white tea tables of Albion must cross two seas, parts of two oceans, to say nothing of gulfs, bays, and other briny items. As for the turtle soup over which aldermen, napkin in collar, smack their lips at Mansion House dinners, where are the turtles caught to make it? In the Thames? Certainly not. They come from the Mosquito Bank off Nicaragua and are netted and shipped by the fishermen of Cayman.

Grand Cayman, on maps, is hard to find unless the atlas is large and your patience long—one speck of British pink on the broad blue Caribbean. It arches its seventeen-mile back just a few feet above the sea there south of Cuba; an isle of glossy and shimmer-

ing green leaves, ringed about with the white of surf or whiter sands. When I set foot ashore it was a bright March Sabbath morning; the almond trees, which celebrate their autumn in that month, were towers of green and crimson along the white shore lane, while the "Easter lilies" and amaryllises, for which it was the spring season, stood in the white-sanded yards in clumps of translucent white and scarlet.

No less shining, white cottages had doors of buff or peacock blue; by the picket gates roosters arched their burnished necks, crowing brassily in the hot sunshine. Here was the Torrid Zone in its purest colors—an island made for great calms and heats. While we bathed in the glass surges on West Bay Beach, a young islander who had befriended me would lift his arm and point seaward, to the waterspouts twisting their black ducts from sea to sky. He looked a figure out of some old sunburnt myth, pointing to perils that cannot touch enchanted ground.

"Angelic dynamo! Ventriloquist of the Blue!" burst out Hart Crane, remembering Cayman, and trying to describe it in one ejaculation. His rhapsody the Caymanians make small pretense of fathoming. Their usual visitors are not poets, but gentle ornithologists with very little to say, or evangelists who devote their time to reporting the existence of another and even brighter world. Besides, turtles (and postage stamps) are the Caymanians' concern.

By agreement between Nicaragua and the British Crown, only these islanders have the right to net turtles on the Mosquito Bank. Such is the present form of monopoly they established for themselves when the catch in home waters dwindled, and maintained a great many years thereafter by dint of hardihood, looking sharp, and not being afraid to dare.

Jamaica, of which Cayman is a dependency, had its heyday in the eighteenth century. Those were the times when William Beckford, richest of Englishmen, built fantastic castles in the wilds of Portugal and wrote *Vathek* on an income that poured

in from his Jamaican sugar lands. The planters and governors who came and went, and the red-coated fashionable military, took home a taste for turtle soup: like the tobacco of America or the tea of the East, the Creole luxury was accepted as one of the great empire blessings—in fact became a British institution. Thus the Caymanians, on their outpost near earth's best turtling grounds, in time found themselves supplying the meat not only for the opulent Jamaican "second breakfasts," but for dinners at Mansion House in far-off London.

In the long pursuit of this one business the islanders have learned a great deal about it. The management of their sloops and schooners, whose sails continually brighten the western Caribbean, in two hundred years has made them that sea's most respected sailors. No yacht cruises the West Indies, people say, without at least one Caymanian aboard. Ashore, every boy rigs toy boats and expects to follow the sea. Every old man, behind his leathered brow, stores the memory of ports and storms and is as likely as not to be a retired sea captain. As for the women, they are true sailors' wives, who vie in boasting of the superior agonies of their various fits of seasickness on trips away from home.

Ships' carpentry is the island art. Under the almond trees the keels are laid, saws buzz, and hard timbers, chosen for their natural curvature, are shaped and squared. The Caymanian specialty is a catboat, sharp both fore and aft, painted the intensest blue that money will buy. This color, the fishermen say, is least soon noticed by the turtles, when the boats creep up above them at their feeding grounds; but on the still fiercer blue of the island's harbor it so dazzled my non-turtle eyes, that the sky in comparison looked faded-rosy.

As for the turtles they net, the Caymanians very well know their subsea habits, and how to keep them alive while they are being shipped. The women at home are expert in cooking turtle meat.

My first taste of West Indian green turtle was in the soup form, at the old Cheshire Cheese in London, where it cost what is euphemistically referred to as a "pretty penny." More recently, in Nassau, I was so lucky as to be invited to dine on baked turtle—a dish, by the way, made from a recipe of 1774 at the latest, at which date Janet Schaw's *Journal of a Lady of Quality* includes it in a West Indian feast.

The creature itself was not a large one, but provided a great event. Soup, really excellent, came first, with the pale green of lime slices riding on its darker bosom; next, the beast proper, turned bottom up, with its flipper meat in a ring of force-balls and an ornate crust of scrolls and ribbons arching where its breast-plate once had been. When Mrs. MacAfee, my hostess, plunged in her fork, a gust of steam rose, through which I caught a glimpse of the black cook's radiant face, peeping from the pantry.

In Grand Cayman such dainty treatment is thought unworthy of a turtle. What! stuff him back in his own shell as if he were a crab? Very undignified. Moreover, to bake their turtles entire, two hundred pounds of meat and casing, would strain anybody's oven. No, the Caymanians butcher their turtles as if they were steers. Assorted slices of the meat, with strips of fat and pale toothsome tissues, are fetched home from market threaded on loops of thatch-palm fiber, to be pot-roasted with tomato, herbs, and plenty of pepper.

It makes a dark and savory dish. When Mrs. Jones, who took care of me in Georgetown, set down the platter, it was with a thump of satisfaction. Here *was* something. And seating herself where she could keep an eye on the chickens and whop the cat when he grew too querulous at the door, she would repeat the compliments heaped upon her roast turtle by my predecessors. It was the new arrival's turn to add quotable remarks, I could see that plainly. And since she was a widow who had had a great many troubles to bear, there in the little white house among the

breadfruit and orange trees, I did my best to oblige. The epitaph writer was not to be outdone in compliments by any mere ornithologist or a parcel of Adventist missionaries.*

At night, in Georgetown, after the blue catboats had been tied to their buoys, and the West Indian nightingale, teetering in an orange tree, had said its last melodious say, the moon would begin to shine in a queenly style, and the white roads that wound narrowly among the fruit groves looked whiter than ever.

On one such night I walked out to Captain Panton Thompson's. The Sunday previous I had seen him ride in to church on his pony, with a hymnbook under his arm and a straw hat set to a geometrically precise horizontal atop his gray head. We had become acquainted then, exchanged views on international politics, and he had asked me to dinner at Linnhirst Avenue, his little estate, giving me directions as to how to reach it.

This proposed venture threw Mrs. Jones into a fever of anxiety. How could she trust me to find my way on so large an island? It was like praising her turtle over again; I had to be profuse, extensive, and superlative in my promises to turn back if I found myself bewildered, before she would let me go. And then, footing it straight ahead down quite the right road, whistling in the

* Cayman, by the way, is a rock-ribbed stronghold of Presbyterianism, not easy to undermine. Perhaps the stranded mariners who were its earliest settlers were Scotchmen, as in the case of Calabash Bay. Worthy of note here, too, is the fact that those other ancient white communities—more extraordinary because English-speaking in Latin America—the Bay Islands off the north coast of Honduras, have Caymanian names attached to two of the principal families, viz: Bodden and Kirkconnel.

moonlight, I was overtaken by a guide she had sent after me on a bicycle.

This proved to be none other than Miss Hilary Thompson, the captain's daughter. She hopped off her steed and (to explain myself in a gruff way) was a welcome adjunct to the moonlight walk. I had never heard of a girl named Hilary before; she had a charm and humor that well suited the pretty oddness of the name. As for Americans, they are not commonly met with on the Caymanian roads. Thus, as we trudged ahead through moon-cast shadows of naseberry and shaddock trees, or past paddocks where cattle munched in the moonlit guinea grass, we had reason to look upon each other as beings out of the ordinary.

The captain we found with his shoes off. The night was hot, and long years of command have accustomed him to independence of the world's opinion. Dinner, too, was not turtle but fish. But we talked turtle, as is inevitable in Cayman, after we had argued out the probable fate of the British Empire. And then no less inevitably on that island we talked postage stamps. Miss Hilary, at the magic words, fetched down her album.

On the subject of postage stamps I am not really batty. When aged twelve I had an album with *G. Smith, the Stamping Man* in large letters on the flyleaf, and pasted in it as many kings, queens, and presidents as I could get for nothing. To this day, in fact, I enjoy inserting the bright bits of paper—which innocent fun, so Max Beerbohm says, is the basis of the philatelic frenzy. But luckily I have gone no farther, nor has Miss Hilary. To her and her father, however, stamps mean more than they can to me, because they are Cayman Islanders.

To the Caymanians, a new series of island stamps is as great a matter of anxiety as a college revue is to the club that gives it. Heaven be propitious!—will it, will it be a hit? In these obscure places where stamps bought for actual use are few, the big post office customers are the dealers of the outside world, and the

million collectors for whom they buy. In 1937, for example—the year of my visit—these helpful foreigners, spontaneously and without a hint of growling, paid two thirds of island government expenses. The gay-hued pictures of conchs and catboats, booby birds, and turtles, had taken the small boys' and the old boys' eyes the wide world over. No dealer could get enough of them. No hot cakes ever sold faster.

The chief business in a Caymanian post office, thus, is the postmarking of empty envelopes plastered with these philatelic hot cakes. The postmaster of Georgetown spoke with a sigh of the forthcoming coronation series, and of how on the day of issue he would have a hundred and thirty thousand stamps to postmark legibly with that historic date. All bogus mail, too, as usual. At Cayman Brac a bottle of liniment stood on the shelf ready for the same ordeal's cramps and pains; and after it, the Thompsons both agreed, the staff would certainly deserve to be treated to a midnight turtle supper.

These Arcadian fiscal wonders set a bee to buzzing in my cap. Here was an easy and harmless means of financing *my* island. No stamps would spot the world's albums with gaudier reds and blues than mine, and for an added lure why not issue a series of bathing beauties? A nude or two, such as the Spanish Republic risked, no doubt would keep the higher denominations "moving" . . .

But thought so guilty mantled me in a blush. Luckily the moonlight did not reveal this: we had come out to inspect Miss Hilary's garden, with a flashlight to give her roses their daylight colors one by one. She grew balsams, too, gayer than the penny-ha'penny stamps that are the islands' gayest. Then alone on the white road again, resolving to send off a bushel of post cards, each with that rarity on it, an actually used Cayman Islands stamp, I tramped back to town.

On the "next *Cimboco*" the bushel and I sailed off together to the outside world. The mail boat's chief cargo was not postage

stamps, however, but turtles. Two hundred and twelve of them there were, broader than washtubs, making the trip to Kingston with me.

What a smell!—sickly sweet, as if designed to give the Caymanian women passengers new seasick pangs to boast of. As for myself, the safest place aboard was well forward where the breeze blew fresh. Stretched out on a heap of sail there, with the gold teeth of a sailor flashing over me as he talked contemptuously of the turtles of Galápagos and Costa Rica—which are caught ashore, lean from the laying of their eggs—I could look down the hatch at ours, netted at sea while fat and luscious. Tier on tier they lay, all upside down. With their pale front flippers crossed in resignation on their pale bosoms, they looked like a sleeping ward of lawn-sleeved bishops.

At Kingston, however, where they were hoisted up, weighed, and transshipped in a great hurry to turtle-hungry London and New York, this air of resignation was cast off. Our bishops hissed, snapped their jaws, and brandished their hind flippers in an awful fashion. The future they had a right to dread. Their present discomfort no onlooker could but commiserate.

All the same, they were being treated with more consideration than I was, in a way, or those dear articles of island commerce, the postage stamps. While we (apologetically) were kept waiting, they went ashore, two hundred and twelve strong, one at a time. The Caymanians value their postal receipts, and love nothing better than welcoming visitors to their islands. But business is business after all, and turtles are turtles.

Chapter XI.

"WHAT'S THE DEAD MAN'S CHEST OUT there," said Melby, "mentioned in *Treasure Island.*"

Several people had pointed it out already; however, I gazed with interest at this coffin-like *Caja de Muertos* projecting from the sea. "It used to be a puzzle," I sighed, "to imagine how fifteen men could sit on one man's chest. I thought it meant his bosom. But your island here is big enough to hold even more marooned pirates than that."

" 'Drink and the devil had done for the rest,' " chanted Melby over the roar of the wheels: it was payday in the great sugar district on the south coast of Puerto Rico, and this was the pay car, a Ford with steel wheels to ride the railroad tracks.

To the north the mountains, green and tawny, slowly moved past us; to the south the blue Caribbean did the same. Between, and with our rails down the middle of it, was irrigated cane land; now and again we passed a disused sugar mill, its pipes and boilers exposed like an anatomical exhibit, or more rarely the tall chimneys and huge bulk of a *central* that had supplanted these earlier units. But our business was not with the mills. Melby was paying the right-of-way maintenance crews, road crews, and ditch cleaners.

Periodically we would stop for the purpose. The roar of the wheels would lessen; quiet would descend about us on the cany

landscape. This gave my host a chance to say something without straining his voice, and so I heard how the ditch cleaners sometimes trod on snails and cut themselves, or perhaps it would be the children swimming in the canals. Result: elephantiasis, with arm or leg swollen as stiff as a fence post. "They will do it," he grumbled.

And having got on the topic of unreasonableness, Melby went on to tell how the laborers celebrate their release from toil joyously when the cane-grinding season ends. "You'd think they'd celebrate the beginning of it!" he protested, "—they need their wages bad enough!" He was a Yankee, which made such remarks seem more natural than the glib Spanish occasionally unloosed for the benefit of his assistant on the back seat.

But the striking thing about that morning's talk was what it failed to include. The general silence was only deepened by it. Mute as fish the laborers would drop their tools, assemble, and take the cash doled out by the little less mute assistant. If necessary, a question was put or a report was made. Then Melby would start his car, and while the men looked at the good American money in their hands we rolled away.

After one such frolic, as I was about to ask if nobody knew any jokes, Melby shouted an inquiry: So-and-so, the week before, had been stung by a centipede—was he feeling all right again?

This specimen of humanity seemed hopeful. "In Jamaica, a while back," I ventured, "I stayed at a plantation, and when we went riding the darkys would skip to open a gate if they saw us coming. But here, the other night when the superintendent was showing me around, the men lounging beside a gate let me hop out to open it. It seemed surprising."

"You don't understand," said Melby. "These little brown fellows are American citizens and our equals. Why abase themselves before their boss?"

"But don't they like him?" I persisted. "I like him so much. Or doesn't he like them? Is that what's the matter?"

" 'How's the wife and kids, my man?'—is that what you think we need?" countered Melby. "Holy Christopher! and with such an army!"

"Well, somebody should try to tell the privates apart, no matter how big the army," I barked. "Napoleon did pretty well with his." For all their hurry, the paymasters in my own experience had managed to infuse payday with sociability, and layoffs with some regret. "And how about it," I went on, "have you made any safe bathing places in these shack villages we've been seeing, to keep the kids out of the canals?"

As it happened, however, (I'm glad to say) the query did not occur to me then, nor even when the two of us dived into the sky-blue pool reserved for the *central's* executives. We parted in amity. Two nights later it was that I tossed in bed hour after hour, reducing him to a pulp with imaginary sharp talk of the kind. This was in Ponce, after I had strayed into the slums that environ the old aqueduct.

Ponce, like most cities, has two faces. Its plaza is as agreeable a civic center as heart could wish. One end of it is open and tree-ringed for fiesta booths, band concerts, and poetry recitations. The other is a maze of bosky paths, with benches, fountains asquirt, and statuary—a place made for more private music and poetry of the handholding sort. Between, and pleasant too, is the cathedral; with a stagelike fire barn built against its back, in which the red-shirted *bomberos* entertain lady friends of an evening while the adjoining cafés pour out Cuban rumbas.

What took my eye most, however, was the high school youngsters who streamed by in the afternoons. They were beings of exceptional beauty.

A benign decree had put all the girls in honey-colored shirtwaists and brown pleated skirts, which simplicity brought out

the gracefulness of their carriage and the brunette fineness of their complexion. The wide smooth brows of those Ponce girls, between hair brushed back in lustrous dark wave above and large dark eyes below, were made, obviously, to be kissed. As for the boys, they looked ready to enjoy the treat—downy-moustached, flex-jointed, prankish Latins.

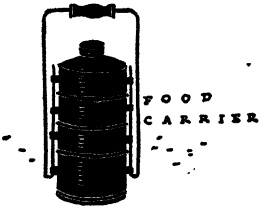
Shantytown was another study.

For a sample household, here was one in a piano crate that had been pieced out ingeniously with the bottoms from several old tubs. Under the roof hung a row of small dresses, brand-new and all alike—the kind bought in the North, as shoppers brag, for next to nothing. The housewife was making one more as fast as she could, while her own daughters, not much larger than the American tots she was sewing for, climbed the hill cheerfully in shirttails, with tins of water on their heads.

Not that Puerto Rican needlework is to be shunned as the produce of scenes of squalor. Much of it comes from the convents and new-built factories. And if the chief marvel of shantytown's part of it is its cheapness, the second is the cleanliness that is somehow maintained. Straining her eyes out at work after sunset, the seamstress still has energy to keep the pig and chickens where they belong and to cleanse the premises with water fetched by hand.

But the hard thing about hard bargains is, that what we gain by them somebody else must lose: here was a proverb soon worded while I tossed in bed after a too-good late supper of Mallorquine spinach pie, with nuts, meat cubes, and raisins in it. God bless the Hotel Meliá's cook and his recipes from kitchenwise Mallorca! The plutocrat with the bellyache blamed not him nor them for his insomnia, but lavished his ire on Melby. I felt for the exploited ones of the isles. And like a pageant through the mosquito net, the story of their exploitation passed fitfully, to

illustrate the harangue with which I nonplussed my poor absent adversary.



For wealth was what Columbus had come for, and sure enough, a little gold was found in Santo Domingo for a preliminary delusion. The first New World news was of gums and spices, nuggets big enough to roast a pig in, and the pearls of Cubagua—also of a ready supply of naked and submissive natives for miners, divers, and concubines.

With such word flying from tongue to tongue, the West Indies became the original Wild West. Earth's dread outmost bound, the Atlantic, suddenly beckoned like the road to riches. For the type of adventurer that packed off at once, Balboa will do: to reach his peak in Darien and immortality, but first and foremost to elude his creditors, he absconded from Santo Domingo as a stowaway in a barrel.

But the New World was by no means immediately profitable. Columbus's "chewing gum" proved not to be mastic after all. Pineapples, the first American produce to ravish the palate of Europeans, could not be shipped. As for minerals, the island resource of gold was meager; coarse metals such as the iron of Daiquirí in Cuba could be had more easily at home. The asphalt of Trinidad had to wait for Sir Walter Raleigh for a discoverer; and the petroleum that makes the same island a chief source of all-British oil was a blessing even less appreciated than chewing gum four centuries ago.

King Ferdinand, meanwhile, was pinched for funds. The recent expulsion from his country of the Moors and Jews, despite the

confiscation of wealth that had made it seem so happy an idea, had lost for him his best taxable and wealth producing groups. The outstanding citizens now were veterans, harping on what was owed them for their part in the Moorish wars. If the New World was poor in quick profits, at least it was rich in land: to the pests, if they would take it, he gave estates in Hispaniola, Cuba, Puerto Rico, or Jamaica, meted out by the *montón*.

The *montón* was a cassava hill, as if we should measure farms by the potato hill; an estate of 100,000 *montones*, called a *peonía*, was the portion of an infantryman or *peón*—from the name of which type of estate our word "peon" is re-derived. The first peons were the natives of Hispaniola, for the king kindly bestowed with each grant of land the Indians needed for its cultivation.

To the islanders all this must have been perplexing and hateful, as I pointed out to Melby; capitalism was installed suddenly with them as the base. After the communal life, with labor shared and fitted to primary needs only, it was killing to be set to the drudgery of creating cash wealth for others. And killed they were, actually, by the process.

So perished the Arawaks of the Greater Antilles, while I rolled over once more and turned the pillows hot side down. The Caribs by trouncing Ponce de León in Guadeloupe earned a final century of the old ways for their Lesser Antilles; but the Bahamian natives, Columbus's committee of welcome, were enslaved and exterminated in entirety. I treated Melby to several gruesome instances.

But presently, in those old days, when Mexico and Peru turned out to be the bonanzas for which everybody had been looking, Spain's interest in her islands, as Max Beerbohm would say, declined by leaps and bounds. They were left to wallow in neglect. Various lessons had been learned there, to be sure, during the first lively years—for example, the delights of tobacco. Sugar, a

luxury formerly very rare (honey had been the world's sweetening), was found to grow at a touch, almost, in these benign tropics. At the touch, that is, of forced labor.

Spain herself, meanwhile, purse bursting with easy money, no longer bothered to be productive. The rich can always afford to buy. But it is hard to stay rich, and presently Spain was not doing so. As through a millrace her money drained off to the Northern powers, her purveyors and brokers. By the middle of the seventeenth century, in fact, England, France, and Holland were ripe to invest in colonial ventures of their own. Impudently they grew sugar, indigo, and tobacco on the smaller of Spain's West Indian islands, and encouraged the buccaneers to throttle her transoceanic commerce.*

Poor Puerto Rico, in consequence of all this, was all but cut off from the mother country. Those colonials who had not pulled up stakes, the Indians still remaining, and slaves escaped from the mercantile break-back of St. Thomas, had to work out their own insular salvation. And while they were at it, in long-enforced privacy, they began to merge into what has become a people singularly homogeneous, to judge by New World standards.

Here guitar music from the street stole up to give their identity deeper meaning. The faces of the Ponce schoolgirls haunted my mosquito net, and another girl's seen dimly on the Yauco road: a heart-of-man vine poured down its scent from the eaves over her head, while her sweetheart, jaunty in a new straw hat, leaned on the gate to thrum his guitar and sing in half-voice as this late stroller was singing now.

A poor shack that had been, as usual, with tree frogs chirping their clear octaves in its loops of vines. And here the face of the aqueduct seamstress haunted me instead, and her bravely makeshift house; I saw the merry brown tots being put to sleep four in a bed in rickety La Perla, and Melby's ditch crews looking at

* One large island, Jamaica, was seized by England in Cromwell's time. Admiral Penn, Pepys's friend and William's father, was the hero of the raid.

their money. Whereupon, of course, here we were riding along in the pay car as before and I continuing the lecture.

For if Spain's methods in the isles were unexemplary, so were the Northerners'. The Caribs, it was soothing to remind Melby—never enslaved but soon edged out—at least had the comfort of watching the interlopers kill one another. St. Kitts, for one fertile island, changed hands in so many patriotic cat-and-dog fights that the monotony of the story sets a man to yawning. Tobago was even held on occasion by the Baltic Latvians.

But in spite of these acrimonies and butcheries and hauling up and down of flags, sugar made Frenchmen and Englishmen millionaires. The stateliest of Dutch mansions were founded on tobacco profits; on the slave trade Liverpool and Bordeaux grew great and rich.

The North-held islands, in fact, were such money-makers that at the end of the Seven Years' War it was a study for Britain to decide whether she should take Guadeloupe or Canada for her spoils. Benjamin Franklin urged Canada, and such was finally the choice; which loss the French accepted with a shrug. "A few acres of snow," Voltaire called the place; whereas Guadeloupe, saved for France, brought in solid sugar profits and beans from that rich orchid, the vanilla.

But the great value of the Northerners' West Indies faded at the terrible news that sugar could be extracted from a beet. Island economy had to adjust itself to a low or at best an ordinary income. Only mainland abnormalities revive the old fabulous earning power—Venezuela's political freaks, for instance, which have made it prudent to refine that country's oil in Curaçao and Aruba; or Prohibition; or some World War or other to boost sugar's sagging price.

But here about me while I stared into the top of the mosquito net, the old order seemed still to be in force. Puerto Rico, and Cuba like it, had come to commercial eminence a century later than the other islands. Until the Spanish-American War the

North had not had much chance to bring in progress. These sugar lands were being worked under the expert eye of outsiders who had come down not to live but to earn. The profits too, and the product, were destined for outsiders mainly.

That these people were a fine lot and used their money well, who could be readier to grant than I? They were of my own class and country. But the planters of the old regime likewise thought kindly of themselves. Slavery seemed natural or even scriptural to them, as our systems seem moral and natural to us.

The test was, perhaps—that is, for me (and here my reflections started to dissolve and presently I went to sleep)—should my island's economy be up-to-date, with some wages at least in everybody's pocket, or was old slavery the thing—at its mellowest, of course, as in an operetta? Postal sales might pay for such luxuries as books and lamp oil, but real work would have to be done by somebody, to provide shelter and good food. Perhaps Blue Hole's kind landlord-tenant relationship was the ticket, with its invidious distinctions in my favor. Or maybe not. For the memory of peasant-owned places now came to mind, Tortola, Carriacou, Calabash Bay, and the like—toilsome, poor, nobody's bonanza—and the feeling of happiness that came with it made me suspect that they were happiest of any.

But it is hard to define the base on which happiness is most secure. People well-off according to my notion frequently repine, whereas others entitled to grumble radiate good cheer. Certainly the bus load of poor Puerto Ricans with whom I rode across the island to Arecibo next morning was full of fun. The conductor's shirt-tail got pulled out, he rumpled the passengers' hair in vengeance, and rang up fares in fancy rhythms.

Even if we had begun the trip unsociably its thrills would soon have thawed all reserve. Puerto Rico's road system is the West Indies' most complete, and from the trees that beautify it, mile on mile, bus riders are very often bounced to eternal bliss. Crosses are nailed up for a memorial to these events, and as they flashed by I realized how cheap life is in overcrowded places. Or perhaps our driver depended too much on a holy medal, glued piously on the windshield. From an S-curve ahead in the mountain road his attention wandered to the lunch pail at his feet: what had wifey prepared this time for his noon surprise?

The inquiry was cut short by a screech from the women passengers. On two wheels we were skirting eternity's deep brink. "*Mi madre!*" he prayed, wrenching away from that peril into the path of another bus roaring down upon us from uphill. But, the devil take it! now the pail lid was in danger of rolling out. Should he save it or save us all?

By a miracle he did both. As the busses passed each other on the wrong side, a terrific eddy of air turned up every turned-down hatbrim. It was very comical.

"I was in an auto accident once in Maine," said the man beside me, turning his hatbrim down again. He was a Mallorquine, but had gone to Maine to open a shoe factory and get rich. The winters and the New England conscience had proved gruelling, however; there was the accident and finally a bankruptcy. In a word, he had settled in Puerto Rico to sell shoes made by someone else.

"And sales are pretty good, too," he beamed. It was a place with money.

"In Anguilla, now . . ." he went on, which made me prick up my ears: here was an island I had not managed to visit. But he had a grudge against Anguilla. It was the reverse of Puerto Rico, poor in cash. The people fished and grew yams; the only wages in anybody's pocket were earned by transients who went elsewhere for them.

"Too much barefoot!" he complained. "However, I go over about once a year. A man over there is a friend of mine. He likes Anguilla and don't worry how many buttons are off his pants. 'Slick up!' I used to tell him, 'you're getting seedy.' 'Well,' he'd say, 'when I have a wife she'll keep me neat.' And what should he do one day but get engaged. She was a high-class young Boston lady; life, now, was going to be very different. But while he was impatiently waiting for his bride at St. Kitts, all at once he married an island girl instead, as if he had guessed that he didn't want his life changed so much after all, and needed a safeguard in a hurry. Of course he radioed the young Boston lady and told her not to bother to get off the ship, but she did anyhow, for the afternoon; she borrowed a *machete* to cut up the wedding cake she had brought, covered with truelove knots and cupids, and made a great show of handing the pieces around to the foreshore bums. What publicity! Unforgettable!"

"Never trifle with a Boston girl," I smirked, like a burnt child who knows all about fires. Overhead on the mountain slope the coffee bushes looked to be freshly dipped in wax as usual, and the sword plants in the mountaineers' dooryards were decked out curiously with blown eggshells, leaf by leaf.

"There you have it!" Señor Guasp exclaimed. "In Anguilla it is yams and peas; in Puerto Rico eggshells put out for a garden. These people here buy what they eat, rice and beans and codfish. They keep cash in circulation and a salesman has a chance to pick

some up. But look ahead, now!" he cried; "A noble view of my new home city!" for beyond the plain's green cane fields and the loops of a loitering river, stood Arecibo, solid-built on a tongue of higher ground by the sea.

"You will stay at the Grand," said Señor Guasp dogmatically as we rode into town. "We do not have a cook from Mallorca there, alas, and the waiters join us in our table talk and help themselves to toothpicks; but you will get your fill of good Puerto Rican food."

Lunch was indeed a prodigy. Item one in it was a *sopa de substancia*; next came two soft-boiled eggs; third, codfish fritters, and minute-fish fried with an astute touch of garlic. The entree course was very extensive: beefsteak and onions with braised potatoes and side dishes of pink yam, white peas, boiled plantain, hominy cakes, cabbage seasoned with sausage slices, and a generous salad. When a half fried chicken followed this, I gave Señor Guasp what must have been a speaking look: he burst into an explosion of laughter and wagging his finger fanwise, cried, "My young friend, the heart of a real Puerto Rican lunch is yet to come!" And sure enough, the "rice-and-beans" was brought in next.

Having kept up thus far, Mr. Stuffing resolved to fight through to the end. Seizing the ladle I heaped red beans and sauce on my heap of rice, poured olive oil recklessly over all, and stirred. And into me the excellent mixture went, on top of the chicken, the beefsteak, the fish, the eggs, and the soup of substance. Then from the kitchen, where a red brick stove loomed altar-like, Juancho came on the skip with a slab of egg custard in a lake of syrup. I ate that too and drank my coffee.

Supper did not quite rival lunch; still, it was a cornucopia of victuals. After the coffee Señor Guasp helped me to rise and led me out to stroll the plaza like a good Latin.

"Rice-and-beans," he mused, lighting a cigar, ". . . there is

the national dish. And in Santo Domingo too. Not everybody eats at the Grand; for the poor, rice-and-beans makes the whole meal. It starves the island. But the annatto they use to color the rice, like their fathers used saffron in Spain, is full of the vitamins they need the worst. God is kind, giving them medicine when they think they are just making their rice more pretty."

There was nothing for it; I had to belch.

"A great future for West Indian annatto!" cried Señor Guasp, unperturbed, and paused to lose himself in the grandeur of his vision. "As good as cod-liver oil, but no taste. . . . My, oh my!" he went on in a sorrowful whisper, "if I had not been born too soon to promote it!" And touching the finger tips of one hand to his lips, he seemed to draw out a lost promise of things inexpressible.

Then remembering opportunities missed because he was born too late, "Or think of the money made here, in the old times, in pockwood!" he exclaimed. "Magnificent!" And while the children on roller skates screamed about us and the Chiclet sellers chanted their sad evening cries, he instructed me in a matter about which I knew as much as he did: how the great pox that swept like a prairie fire through Europe after Columbus's first voyage, was assumed to have been brought back by his sailors;* and the cure was thought to have been found in West Indian pockwood, that is, lignum vitae. In Tortola I had visited an estate called Pockwood Pond, where iron-hard stumps still clung to the soil for a monument to the syphilitics' old delusion.

"Worthless!" Señor Guasp went on, blowing a blast of cigar smoke. "Yet it made people rich! Money came easy in the islands once. Think what the women could get from one pirate in one night! What a privilege! But nobody makes money like that now,

* This question is still moot. But the defense of America has been undertaken by R. C. Holcomb, Capt. Med. Corps U.S.N. (retired) with (to my mind) dazzling scholarship and success.

here; no, not even your sugar friends. It's a penny at a time, not barrels of gold; business is good if they just come in steady."

But my brain, sluggish with too much feeding, had not got back yet from Pockwood Pond. This talk of island earnings reminded me of an account book shown me by a Tortola man. The poetry entered first in it was what Captain Norman had wanted me to see; but his ballads of shipwreck and haunted hills led on into lists of rosin and lanyards, cases of brandy fetched from St. Kitts, fish, mahogany card tables, and sums "Loaned to X to pay to someone"—the business records of a sloop humbly plying back channels from which white-man enterprise long since had vanished.

"Just like Anguilla!" cried Señor Guasp. "No place for a salesman! Since the white people moved out, who puts any money in their pants? In Tortola your big-shot captain wears overalls, I bet."

It was true. And my tale of the cane grinding at Newtown mill made him shrug with still more eloquence. The conch-shell blowing to celebrate labor's end there, was as absurd to him as the parallel doings in Puerto Rico were to Melby. There seemed small point in arguing that in the Golden Age, the tritons had blown exactly such shell toots and boops as these without thought of pay checks or even the pants to put pay in.

Yes, softhead that I am, when Captain Norman took me to Peters Island in the *Pelicanus*, and the millhands' shell music followed us across, it only occurred to me to admire its cheapness. The instruments used cost no more than the wind to blow them—or the wind that so steadily filled our sails.

As for the Peters Islanders into whose world we thus antiquely sailed, they too lived near the beginning place of human endeavor, grubbing the ground a little, taking God's bounty from the sea in nets, or sitting dreamily on their cabin thresholds. From over their heads the oleanders poured down a drowsy scent that after-

noon; laughter was quiet, smiles slow-coming as if deep from within, white skirts drooped in simple folds, old hands were folded over old knees.

But when the bonito fish run, as they did in the Bight that day, and the hill watcher calls down his signal, the islanders wake to action like a carved frieze come to life. The women and men alike take places at the lines, the children beat the shallows on either side, and steadily the net is drawn in, against a weight of brine and fish that my helping hand very soon learned was heavy.

"Old time ways of doing things," sighed Captain Norman, while he showed me the path to Dead Man's Bay. "Old as Egypt. . . . Always bonito in the Bight, here, plenty, plenty: an up-to-date fishery could make some money."

"But the bonito," I faltered, "could they stand it? Which do these people need more, cash or fish?"

"We live happy," replied the captain, "happy and long"; and his overalls flapped in the dune wind as he gazed down to where the waves came rushing. "But if we're to have more than plain fish we need money, eh? Maybe a man could dig some up, here: 'Dead Man's Bay' is a pirate name. And that oblong rock out yonder," he added, "is the Dead Man's Chest you read about in *Treasure Island*."

"*But* . . ." I began; but why expostulate? "There's nothing I'd enjoy more," I agreed, "than to dig up treasure. And if ever I have an island of my own," I went on, "I'll bury some, to let the children find it. For hopscotch playing for little girls, there's nothing that tosses better than a silver dollar."

By way of comment, when I quoted this fine peroration, Señor Guasp at first eloquently said nothing. However, "You have the superior mind and look down on riches," he remarked after we had made another turn. "The hurry to get rich at other people's expense is bad, very bad . . . exploitation, as you call it. But," he added abruptly, "when you write up your host Mr. Melby in

your book and get pay for doing it, what will he call that kind of business?"

"The name can be changed to Jones," I retorted, miffed by the injustice of his implication; and soon went off to stroll by myself in a less noisy part of town. Señor Guasp was a well-meaning man, but his mercantile point of view was tiresome.

Chapter XII.

THOUGH NOW AND THEN THE pigheadedness of mankind puts me in a huff, my nature is essentially pacific. The last fight settled by out-and-out force in Smith annals took place when I was aged five; on which occasion, for a decisive quietus, I brought down a train of toy iron railway cars on my small opponent's head. Bottom up, afterward, and being spanked with a hairbrush, I learned the bitterness of the fruits of victory. It was *on*, you would say, rather than *at* my mother's knee that I imbibed those principles that have since guided me in the more subtly victorious ways of peace.

In these later times, however, when no place is too inoffensive, useless, or remote to be bombed by the advocates of this or that brand of political uplift, it is a puzzle to know how to safeguard an island. All I have done thus far, frankly, toward the defense of mine, is to hope that it will be overlooked, and to lay by a white flag for a quick answer to bomb one. Peace, with all its inconveniences, as William Penn wittily said, is generally preferable to war, and specifically so in this case where heroism wouldn't be worth a flip.

But small islands have been successfully peaceable in the past; three such in the West Indies rose to a greatness in the role all out of proportion to their flyspeck size. Dutch Statia, Danish St. Thomas, and Swedish St. Barts once made as handsome a good

thing of neutrality in the New World as their parent countries did in Europe: these "golden rocks" were like the Jews of the islands in the bonanza years—the stable element at the center of the whirlwind. With sighs of patience and snorts of contempt they watched the gunfire and bloodshed and swift changes of flags and governments about them and—the Jews and the three ports alike—traded discreetly, international-mindedly, and profitably with all.

Of the three ports, Statia* has the most instructive story. Just when most useful, its badge of neutrality was nipped off, with consequences prompt and dismal.

The island itself is a pair of volcanic cones with a saddle of ragged hill between. One cone is old and shattered, the other an upstanding youngster. When you come toward them (a Dutch steamer patriotically does call, ballasted with sea water since there is never a cargo), the forgotten city on their joint lap is slowly revealed. Some of the red roofs, to be sure, prove to be blossoming flamboyant trees, the massive black church tower on the high cliff edge stands at the head of a roofless ruin, and the quays are choked in poisonous manchineel. But a city there is, with amiable dogs of squat Dutch build frisking on the flagstone streets, and people who celebrate the mail boat's monthly night in port with a dance.

The smuggling trade, to the old Spanish mainland whose ports were closed officially to all but Spanish goods, gave Statia a long prosperity. But its golden age coincided with our Revolution. England was at odds with France at the time, as well as with the colonies: Atlantic shipping was bedeviled. Military stores, however, as well as civil necessities, could be consigned safely to the neutral port, to be picked up there by vessels from Philadelphia or New England. Danger of loss by confiscation was reduced,

* Statia, on maps, is "St. Eustatius," St. Barts is "St. Barthélemy," but the shorter names are the ones most generally heard in the islands. The similar nickname "St. Kitts" (for St. Christopher) has long had official standing.

say, by half. Little Statia, in fact, was one of the chief arteries through which the infant republic drew its lifeblood, and if it grew rich at the mercenary calling, no good American can complain.

Trade was enormous. The shore warehouses bulged with quick-moving goods. In their black-towered church the Dutch merchants heartily gave thanks for profits received, while the Jews, in a synagogue a few streets distant, reviewed King Solomon's sensible maxims, grateful for the opportunity Jehovah had vouchsafed them of assisting America to win its freedom.

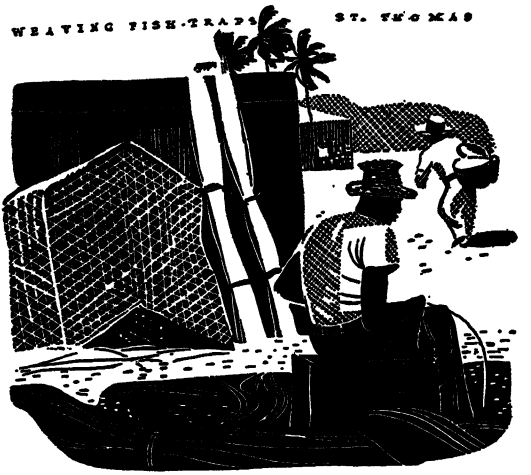
At Statia it was that the "Grand Union"—the original, pre-Betsy Ross American flag—was given its first recognition. Flying this rebel banner, a vessel entered to pick up a cargo of arms, whereupon Governor de Graef, spyglass to eye in old Fort Orange, ordered a salute. He was an impetuous soul, who soon had to be recalled to Amsterdam. For St. Kitts is Statia's very close neighbor and the British governor there, when he learned what had been done, first grew purple, then wrote a report that made London no less apoplectic. And not yet, in 1776, was Holland ready to abandon the advantageous neutral role.

By 1780, however, Britain had not a friend in sight. The empire seemed doomed to a speedy dissolution. Now was the time at which to recognize the United States and in a bold burst Holland did so.

Squash! There was life in the British lion after all: down came a heavy paw on Statia. Admiral Rodney took the island, but kept the Dutch flag flying over it as long as it served to lure in enemy ships. If Fort Orange had chosen to honor the rebel flag, its own could very nicely be put to dishonorable uses.

This was the end of Statia. Its fort still stands and cannon are still mounted on its palmy ramparts. But they are toys out of a past age, used by black urchins for hobbyhorses. No Dutch prayers have been said in the Dutch church these many years,

nor has a Jew worn his shawl in the old synagogue.* The bush-choked warehouses from which Rodney sold fifteen million dollars worth of goods, are ruins whose walls the sea slaps derisively.



St. Thomas's story is more of a comfort. The two and a half centuries of its Danish rule were marked by a consistent and well-paid peacefulness.

The brightest chapter came in the era of the privateers. Here was one port where ships seized and merchandise confiscated found a market with no questions asked. Like Statia, it also served the smugglers and American patriots as an important depot of supply. In fact it was anybody's port to use, a free port, a neutral port, and as cosmopolitan, crowded, and active a port as the world of those days had to show.

So long-continuing a role has given the place a character. Business is its business. If it were not for the French recent comers from St. Barts—the tall-hatted fishermen of Cha Cha Town and

* The Jews resettled in St. Thomas for the most part. Outcasts from the Spanish peninsula, the West Indian Jews were the truest colonists in the Northheld islands, regarding the new home not merely as a place in which to gain wealth but as home indeed. Their civic usefulness in the British islands, when relieved of their old disabilities in one pinch or another, was so patent that it was a strong point in the winning of similar rights for the Jews of England.

the gardeners of Mafolie—every mouthful of food eaten on the island would have to be imported.

As for shrewdness: "I'm a perfect lady, perfect!" a black crone told me one day when, our paths coinciding, we walked along together. Her apron screamed for a washing; her shoes were "cut down" for ventilation. But the old spirit was in her: "That's what I am!" she repeated, warming to her secret strategy. "When I walk along with a gentleman like you I never think of begging. No, I'm a lady, a poor widow lady with no children to give me help; and the sickness closes up my stomach. God help me! what I suffer! But there's no good begging of a gentleman: if he is a real gentleman and has a heart of kindness, he'll see my need without my asking and put his hand in his pocket just like you got yours now. But if his heart is a stone and he is not a real gentleman, he won't bring up nothing for all you beg him. And so because I am a perfect lady I just don't mention these things to a gentleman but put my trust in the Lord."

It was a masterpiece of "presentation" from the old traders' capital. And for a Scandinavian touch, the little dog that scampered ahead of us was named Frithjof.

St. Thomas in its great days likewise developed a character in its architecture. Charlotte Amalie was built as a business city strictly, conveniently compact. For gardens there was little room, but the Spanish trick of gardening in tubs and flowerpots has brought gaiety to the picturesque and crowded groups of buildings. Like its cemetery inscriptions, which would tax the knowledge of a Berlitz, the elements that make the St. Thomian style are of all nations. Spanish shop doors, French galleries, English panelings, and the Dutch-Scandinavian baroque of pudgy pilasters and curved masonry stairs, bit by bit were combined to form it.

Luckily, after the style was set and had pervaded the city, prosperity receded enough to let the beauty of the place stand undisturbed. If Venice, say, had gone on being the Mistress of

the Sea forever, most of its palaces on which we now rapturously feast our eyes would have been pulled down to make room for structures more up-to-date. So with Charlotte Amalie. But the two ports had been rich enough long enough, before having to adjust themselves to more frugal ways, to breed families deep-rooted, substantial, and conservative, that would not let them fall to ruin.

St. Thomas's city, in fact, is one of the world's most charming. While I was footing the hill roads above it to look down on its white-shining masonry and strawberry and cherry roofs, with the clear green of the mahoganies in clumps and avenues, I was joined by an elderly string-bass player out on the same errand. He had never traveled much, he said, but was fond of boats, and some globe-trotting yachtsman friend had told him that St. Thomas was the prettiest spot on earth. So heaven being his not-distant destination, it had occurred to him that it would be interesting to compare the Heavenly City with earth's best; whereupon before it was too late he put his bull fiddle in the closet and came down to take a look.

Although he knew he would go back to his grandchildren and his fiddling in three weeks, he was enjoying a fit of indecision as to how best to spend the rest of his life on the island. Now that we were on the hill, he wanted a breezy hilltop house and began to select sites for it on various eminences. But when he looked back at the harbor, or down at Magens Bay, or off to Hans Lollik Island and the multitude of others grouped away toward the British Virgins, he fell in love with the idea of living in a boat, and smoking his pipe in one turquoise anchorage after another. And then when we came down into the top hill lanes of the city, he found house after house that was his very heart's desire.

"It would be more sociable," he explained. And indeed it was easy to picture a trio of silver-thatched cronies with cellos and violins under their arms, climbing the steps across some flagged

gutter and turning in at a gate with the bust of Orpheus in white marble over it, for a long, happy, earnest bout of music making.

At night I met him again, standing under the windows of Bethania Hall, where a prayer meeting was in progress. Joining the hymn in a private hum and gazing up to where the choir's black heads were bent, he gave me an absent-minded handshake. " 'How lovely are Thy dwelling places!' " he remarked after the amen, blowing his nose in a big handkerchief. It was a moonlit night and the date palm leaning around the corner of the plain old building cast a biblical shadow down the wall.

Choir music was something I was enjoying myself, as usual, in St. Thomas. On practice nights I was sure to be in one church or another, applauding the struggle silently from a dark corner pew.

The Moravians' music was loud and light-operatic; the black young ladies in their floppy white hats, dulcetly choired to the peals of that confectioner's dream, the cream-and-gold pipe organ. The Lutherans' taste, on the other hand, tended toward the strict. Their church, in fact, is one of the most dignified in the Antilles. In its middle hangs a ponderous antique iron chandelier, from whose scrolls and curling foliage protrude a dozen mermaid-angels, lighting the faithful with their lamps—the earnest singers, the fastidious colored organist, and the black boy who pumps the bellows: I see that boy now, loose-necked, heavenward-looking, falling back to bring his full weight on the lever.

In 1672 when the Danes came to St. Thomas and Lutheran hymns first were sung there, they were sung in the fort. Absence from divine worship in those days entailed a fine of twenty-five pounds of tobacco. The fort, indeed, for many years did duty as a church—a humorous sort of little castle, painted red, as if the prayers said in it and that courageous color were all the colony needed for protection. Nor was the combination ineffectual. St. Thomas was a port of peace; there was no point in converting it into a fortress like closed-port San Juan.

The Danes, in fact, seemed to have the knack of making their West Indian forces effective, not by virtue of being dreaded but of being popular. Like the genial much dressed-up policeman who will give dignity to my island, meet boats, and blow the sunset bugle, they were everybody's pet. Uniforms were perfect for ballroom display, and the soldiers' exploits were of the human rather than the inhuman kind.

For example, one sergeant on a trip to Denmark won the National Beer Drinking Contest and returned the island's hero. And a master-of-ordnance, asked to report why brass cannon in the West Indian service had so constantly to be replaced, wrote back, *Cockroaches*. The last laugh in this piece of fun came when headquarters stiffly demanded specimens. "For the Copenhagen Zoo, I fancy," mused the master-of-ordnance, sharpening his quill. *Your Excellencies will understand*, he replied, while his brother officers held their sides, *that insects so destructive would make short work of any container in which we might try to forward them, or even impair the seaworthiness of the ship entrusted with carrying them to Denmark.*

After all, the most useful kind of army for a place like St. Thomas, whose one wish was to be on good terms with all customers, was the convivial, fun-loving kind, well drilled in ballroom dancing.

As for St. Barts, perhaps you are surprised to learn that Sweden ever formally administered a New World island. But I tell no lie, she did, from 1784 to 1877. Moreover, this quite forgotten colony served as a port for vessels by the thousands.

Like Statia and St. Thomas, St. Barts is one of the tiny isles flanking the Anegada Passage—that exit from the Caribbean that most directly looks toward Europe. In 1800, thus, when Europe's sweetness as well as a large part of her coffee, tobacco, cabinet woods, salt, and dyes, derived from the West Indies, it was near the New World's commercial hub. But it was a mere eight square mile scrap of unproductive scenery, far inferior in trade to St. Thomas, where the stimulus of neutrality had been working for a hundred years.

At just this juncture, Napoleon, "that little man," unfolded his arms. The world split, and astounded St. Barts woke to find itself the sole neutral port of exchange in the Western Hemisphere. Even Denmark was hauled backward near enough to trouble to prompt Britain to hold St. Thomas till the fight was over. As for the United States, technically neutral, its shipping was so harassed by the war-nervous British that we had to pitch in and fight the War of 1812. Of all the powers with interests in America, only Sweden managed to keep free of belligerency. St. Barts's position was unique.

Prosperity was instantaneous, meteoric. But when Napoleon went to St. Helena, St. Barts went to the dogs. Their fortunes waxed and waned together.

For a symbol of greatness lapsed, the morose skeleton of a great stone-built hostelry looms by the harbor mouth with the moon leering through its glassless windows. The flagstone quays are steeped in a profound inanimation. But "going to the dogs" is too harsh a term. St. Barts's dizzy fling was like the one supreme adventure in a quiet life, that enriches it with anecdote and leaves an aura of romance around what otherwise might be prosaic. Over the grass-grown quays the bowsprits still bristle in crowded rows, if you listen to the stories of the place. "In Swedish times . . ." the tales begin invariably.

The fine inn of those Swedish times, and their rowdy sailor

taverns, have been supplanted by Madame Guyer's boarding-house on the Rue Oscar II. "All in the American style!" she beams, hustling the newcomer to see the bathroom. But it is American with a difference. No water connects with the familiar fixtures. As for her American front door, it had been installed with the night latch "on" when the house was built, which had proved very unhandy all these years. She could go out but she could not come in. Trudging around to the back, however, she had accepted as the American way, until, having released the latch, I ignorantly overthrew household habit by stepping in with a casual hello.

Madame was dumbfounded. Not even Neptune, arriving in a rush of foam, could have made a more pronounced sensation. But as soon as she was certain of the miracle, in and out she swung, crying, "My god! my god! it opens from both sides!"

This tall and hospitable lady is descended in part from Swedish ancestors, and though she knows no Swedish her speech carries in it the cadence of that tuneful singsong language. But she and her (generally dark) city neighbors do not dominate the island. The human debris of a great trading era, they are like people ship-wrecked long since on an alien shore—rooted in it thanks to a freak of history but not yet really native. St. Barts was French before its Swedish century and is French again. When the drum rolls and the town crier reads a proclamation, it is read in St. Barts's more natural tongue.

But the deeper-rooted countryfolk are after all Scandinavian in their remote ancestry—Norman fishermen and herders. Their stone-walled lanes and wind-whipped grassy pastures, their neat stone-terraced gardens, look very odd and pretty on the tropic isle. The girl who puts you on the right road to Corossol, when you are walking, is a Norman peasant in starched white sunbonnet and bright flowered apron; and most unexpected and delightful she is too, found knitting under a soursop tree.

Corossol, on its sickle of beach, has no Norman air as a village, to be sure. The hurricanes have dictated other architecture. "Little house fall light," as the Tortola Negroes say. But its doings and its people are another matter, and their feather beds and the twice normal-size tambourines that set the rhythm of their music.

In white bonnets every Tuesday the good housewives toil up a path of leg-breaking steepness to Colombier Church to confess their sins. Monday, in Corossol, is the day for washing clothes, Tuesday, the day for souls. The woman who told me had a face like a clear window into the simple heart.

I tried the penitential path myself—a staircase of gully boulders. For all its heat, the tamarinds cast a welcome shade across it and the banks on either hand quivered with the motion of gold butterfly wings.

Beyond the church I climbed still farther, up and around the mountain by circuitous wind-blown lanes, to say good-by to Des Cayes, azure Baie de St. Jean, and Pointe de Lorient with its bands of colored rock slanting from the surf. Here, these days past, I had swum and clambered and greedily wolfed cactus-radishes; watched the casting of nets and the plaiting of high-crowned Cha Cha hats, and been nudged in the ribs and poured full of Norman wit—as full, that is to say, as my own shallow linguistic wit permitted. "The man with shoes on travels the whole world through," I had been told, with a friendly push, and understood it: in St. Barts the shod man is the man with money. But these names of villages and bays and headlands have little meaning. Nobody goes to St. Barts to remember the pocket-sized grandeurs of that most nearly perfect of small islands. Nobody has, that is, since Napoleonic times.

As a matter of fact, visiting the place is not especially easy. I went over in a schooner from Marigot, itself a port not vulgarly accessible; then came away to Philipsburg—have you heard of Philipsburg?—in an open boat across sixteen miles of deep-

chasmed blue Atlantic surges. Neither trip was designed for the timid, really, though the latter one, thanks to an expert St. Bartian hand on tiller and sail, was an idyll for a sea-loving mainlander like me.

More hair-raising was the schooner journey. Even the moon that night, hurtling through the clouds, seemed intent on melodrama. When the ship tacked, she reared like a frightened animal, the sails boomed great guns, and the helmsman, a freckled mulatto in wooden shoes, bawled orders in gibberish sea French to the scurrying crew. Goose-fleshy to the soles of my Minnesota feet, I shivered in a coat.

All the same, these undangerous terrors pleased me. It was like an approach to St. Barts, or Statia or St. Thomas, in their most bustling times. No less pleasing was the entry into port: kindly and slowly the harbor closed about us, as it had about so many sailing ships in those war-perilous years. The anchor, let go, sent calm rings of moonlight toward a shore trustfully unawake.

". . . Till morning, *Monsieur*," said the barelegged *mousse*, tugging at my sleeve, and pointed to a doghouse on the afterdeck. In I rolled, dog tired. And till morning, with mouth organ in one pocket and swimming trunks in another, I slept such sleep as the merchants must have known when (safe, too, with their goods) they came to anchor at last, in the old times, in these same ports of peace.

Chapter XIII.

WHEN, IN THE ISLES, I HAVE HEARD music at its most barbarous and hustled to see what *Danse Congo* was afoot, it has always been a Salvation Army band saving sinners. Or nearly always. In Bridgetown occurred one of the exceptional instances when it was something else.

Barbados, as it happened, had had labor riots not long before. Shopwindows had been broken and gore had been spilt. It is perplexing to know how to deal with such unrest, but the method used in this case had been to raise wages and at the same time to police the Bridgetown streets with impressive show of force, as if not one inch had been or would be yielded. Thus, one hot night it was hair-raising suddenly to hear a tumult of drums from the maze of shanties beyond Lake's Folly Lane. The shriek of a fife pierced my ears like a red-hot needle. Could this be a new outbreak of the riots? Heaven protect me! Or was it just salvation's summons once again?

It was neither. In fact, "It's a Ship," was the strange information I got when I stole in and asked. And "Where's the Navigator?" bawled the crowd that sat on doorsteps or sprawled on the ground.

Hereupon the Navigator tipped his hat and hopped down from the high sill of a grocery and salt-fish shop. A kerosene flare had been nailed on the wall, by whose light the drummers belabored

their instruments like a pair of demons. The gait of the fife player pulled his trouser legs tight at the knees as he prowled pantherlike up and down. But there was nothing sinister about the Ship that soon got into motion: it was a mock military drill.

Both sexes and all ages participated. At the Navigator's commands these black wags marched into the deeper blackness of the alleyway to left or right; then, stepping high and fancy, back they would tramp to the yard's dim yellow zone, do squads-right in exemplary confusion, and mark time with buttocks wagging to bring a laugh. Now and again some fat housewife would skip out of the audience to add her clowning, and one shambling cutup pretended to be drunk.

Between maneuvers there were cinema love songs, and, for the finale (there was no bloodshed), "God Save the King." For this everyone stood serio-comically at the salute. "Ship's done!" then was the cry, and off we went to our other various amusements.

MONGOOSE

Such alarms are quite to my taste. I love the martial when it is directed to a worthy end. The roll of drums that sets the pace for digging the Haitian fields, the trumpet blasts that give notice that there are fish for sale—these things shall be encouraged on my island so long as I am Navigator.

But captaining an island can be a headache, as was realized in Barbados when the plate glass all down Broad Street was riotously pushed in. Am I ready for the job, I wonder? What bothers me most is that my political convictions are so hard to fix.

To the wisdom of the fathers I hesitate to be untrue: more than ever in these times the heart cleaves to democracy. But—must I confess it?—parliamentary procedure kills me dead. For pity's

sake, must the Chair call for the minutes under my sea-grape trees? Besides, a small island such as mine is more like a small tight ship than the crowd for which democratic processes were invented. The rule of majorities on shipboard is called mutiny and universally deplored.

Nor do I find the democratic system very efficient in governing myself. The Old Nick in me, for one member, is a damned demagogue; and self-interest, usually asleep, usually also awakens in time to lock idealism in the gents' toilet during a close vote. And then there is bull-voiced sloth, bellowing for recess. No, the mailed fist is what I need in my own self-management if progress is to be made.

It would seem, thus, as if the firm hand might best rule the isles, a view held by not a few gloomy but sagacious people. A graybeard king, complete with crown and throne, no doubt would lend peculiar dignity to our solemner sort of revels. But as for playing the part myself, God forbid! Between being a cabbage and a king, let me be the cabbage.

The modern dictators, true enough, no longer strut in royal fancy dress: perhaps of a morning while brushing my teeth I could dictate successfully in my underdrawers. But even so, who would this Smith be to say whether my islanders should use paste or powder in brushing theirs? And how, the decree once published, could I take it seriously enough to turn the boys into fighting machines and the girls into breeding machines to ensure its continuing enforcement? No, no, no. When the drums rumble and the sound of marching comes up the hill, it will be some widow's corn plot being hoed, as they merrily do these things in Haiti.

There are books to turn to, of course, for advice on governing an island. Thomas More's *Utopia* is one. Utopia's great glory was the fewness of its laws, which glory will also illumine mine. Nor will my island's laws be even as detailed as Utopia's. The

streets there were set at twenty feet wide: I do not mean to be so explicit.

Then, Sancho Panza, with two chapters of wholesome cautions from his master ringing in his ears, governed his "island" for five more chapters of *Don Quixote*, and very witty reading all seven chapters are. But the deviltry of that island no other could match. I shall never have the legal puzzles to solve that so puckered poor Sancho's brow. Through the rich laughter of those court scenes, however, his philosophy of government can be traced. His notion of how to run things, was to act as mouthpiece for that inner governor, plain common sense.

On such a philosophy Great Britain has succeeded in basing her colonial rule—that is, in small islands like mine, not remarkable for profits. In Tortola, for one such place, I rested my chin often on my thumb to admire the civil simplicities about me.

There is a Commissioner in Tortola; he has been there for years and knows everybody's real estate and worth. He also is the magistrate, and so has learned all about island tricks and grudges. Moreover, he is the doctor, with a neat small hospital to work in, and so has a good means of insight into his people's private lives. The church he leaves to another man, likewise the agricultural station: a British official must move in white society, and these carers for souls and coconuts, together with their wives, provide it for His Excellency. A tea party can be managed very nicely.

As for the few colored officeholders, they go about their tasks without much fuss. When I strolled up the zinnia-bordered paths of Road Town Gaol (the gate was open) to chat with the prisoners while they cooked their lunch, "All *good* boys!" the matron would say, looking affectionately at her charges. By day the three of them went out to do odd jobs around the town, while she patched the seats of their other trousers; but on the morning of my departure they kindly stayed in long enough to wave the

Union Jack, and whoop "Good-by!" seated astride the ridge-pole of the roof.

Strange to say, Tortola wishes it were under the Stars and Stripes. A regime so aggressively generous as the American New Deal in neighboring St. Thomas quite dazzles the islanders. Besides, the British way of letting well enough alone makes the citizens of such odd pockets feel neglected.

St. Thomas, meanwhile, dreaming of its past prosperity, and envious of San Juan's huge growth in commerce, wishes it were Puerto Rico. And Puerto Rico, in turn, looking to the west again to Cuba and Santo Domingo, wishes it could share their strutting brass-buttoned independence. But Tortola does not wish so much. The comfort of nestling like a tick in the British lion's hide it would not exchange willingly for anything but similar comfort, in a similar warm crease, in the hide of a perhaps juicier animal.

All the same, and even with Sancho Panza sent out for governor, I would not want my island to play the role of tick. Islands governed from outside are prone to be thus poor and parasitic; or, rich in their own resources, to be exploited and feel aggrieved. And what is the great virtue of islands if it is not that they are complete in themselves?—clear-cut limits make for natural unity, which is the reason why More set Utopia away from the mainland.

As for a native insular polity, its West Indian forms were suppressed long since in favor of imported makeshifts. Montaigne wrote their swan song; he lived while they were dying. Possibly the primitive systems he praised in his defense *Of the Caniballes* looked better from his study in Perigord than they would have close at hand; the blisses of far-off savagery we essayists are inclined to over-rate. And actually, as I must hasten to admit, he was writing of the Brazilian Indians.

But these Antillean and South American savageries were of a

piece. Besides, his word "Caniballe" was merely one early variant of "Carib," the Caribs or Caniballes being the first man-eaters with whom shocked Europe came in contact.* His sonorous praise of the simplicities of their polity, thus—a simplicity parallel to single-purposed Sparta's—fits as well one place as the other. But though these specialists in war gave the white interlopers tit for tat as long as they were able, civilization finished them off at last. Without exception their Caribbees were presently ruled by the continental powers—and still are, though Martinique and Guadeloupe, as full-fledged departments of France in the era of pre-1940, took part in framing the laws that then governed all Frenchmen.

The Greater Antilles had been cleared still earlier of their Arawaks, whose organized specialty was ballet dancing. In these islands self-government in several instances has been resumed, but it is not again in the hands of dancers. Strong-arm dictators, good or bad, with an army to bring discipline, make it function most successfully. Yes, the atmosphere gives a Northern republican the prickles; it is the old Latin-American course, set with melancholy sagacity by Francia† and Bolívar long ago, of personal rule crystallizing order out of disorder.

MONGOOSE

Being crystallized a little in the process was something the Cold Spring tombstone man in Cuba and Santo Domingo gradually

* Since it is certain that Shakespeare read Montaigne, and likely that "Caliban" is an anagram for "Cannibal," Caliban's first speeches in *The Tempest* (Act I, scene 2) are curious: with wild eloquence he barks out against the foreign theft of his old island liberties.

† Francia, the joyless dictator of Paraguay, 1814-1840, spared his country the devastation of the rest of the continent's revolutionary and civil conflicts by closing its borders, islandlike, to all commercial intercourse and travel.

learned to take. At the cry of "Psst!" I soon was springing into the air like any Latin and landing to face the direction from which the warning had come: *Zona Militar* again! with the usual twin riflemen pointing the way out with their thumbs.

In Santiago de Cuba one fine night, while the fourteen-ton Angel of Justice on the cathedral pediment blew her trumpet in silence over the noisy plaza, I was constrained by the police, in company with a hundred or so fellow strollers, to stroll counter-clockwise. It seemed a tiresome extension of the traffic rules. However, what ruffles the feathers of a dove like me may be quieting to other birds. In Santiago on another night I shared in excitements of another kind.

That city's cathedral, next to Santo Domingo's, is the oldest seat of Church authority in the New World, and in it I attended Rosary and sermon. It was a Lenten service for some men's organization; piety prevailed throughout the dim old edifice.

The sermon I could almost follow. Delivered with slow emphasis, it seemed designed for a listener who still did not know much Spanish in spite of all the English lessons he had been giving. But nothing about it was so emphatic as its end. From a side aisle a missile was hurled at the pulpit by some catfoot intruder, which missile, though it shattered harmlessly, killed our composure, and brought the service to a jangling halt.

"While Christ is with me I fear nothing!" bellowed the preacher to allay the surge of agitation that suddenly rushed forward: what was in the minds of all of us was those Red-scrawled slogans of the Santiago streets. Meanwhile, come what would, the Host had to be exposed and put away according to liturgical formula; but while the priests were at this, a puff of incense was mistaken for smoke from a bomb, which set the congregation in a new stampede.

Feeling somewhat chilly between the shoulder blades after these devotions, I went across the way to the plaza and strolled

counterclockwise. Was Cuba too much or too little policed? On which side of the fence was a liberal to stand?

Earlier, in Havana, I had watched the ovation that greeted the return to the capital of Cuba's strong man, Batista (then still merely "Colonel"), and his latest president. To judge the spirit of these triumphs is not easy, especially in a country whose citizens are naturally festive and live continually in the press of crowds. It was obvious enough that the impromptu Negro bands were in action for the fun of it; in rhythms of spontaneous gladness they thumped on snatched-up packing cases, bits of scrap iron, or their own straw hats. The political clubs, too, marched with a will.

But the colonel failed to appear in his own parade. It seemed more prudent to leave the train in the suburbs and drive inconspicuously to the presidential palace. His luggage came through as scheduled, however. With military escort armed to the teeth, the suitcases provided the majestic climax in a procession made up for the most part of government pensioners, government employees, government dump trucks, and government street-cleaning equipment. Everything that could be hustled in to swell the prodigiousness of the demonstration rolled down the Avenida de Bélgica that day. Nor had the American firms doing business in Cuba omitted to enter their truck fleets in generous entirety.

This great testimony of good will was reviewed from the roof of the palace porte-cochère where the colonel, finely genial, had a smile and a personal nod for every dump-truck driver. On the goddesses of liberty, on floats, he beamed especially. Standing beside him, the little new president was genial too, though in an obscurer way. I wished he would take down the handkerchief that shielded his lips, or take off for a moment the dark glasses that hid his eyes. But though I had no chance to appraise the expression of anything but his nose, the gay old city about

us had signs of the times written across it, unduly ominous to a man not used to Latin politics.

"Yes, yes," the Cubans sigh, but then they shrug, and reflect that countries of far longer experience than theirs are in as hot or hotter water.

Santo Domingo boasted a half-century start on Cuba, for instance, as a sovereign state, and very bloody was the education in self-government that the Dominicans acquired while they were at it. The highest New World mountains east of the main Rocky and Andean chains are in their wonderful country; it is the scene of the oldest New World history; of New World ecclesiastics its archbishop has the most venerable title. In fact Santo Domingo is a land of superlatives, and the chief of these at the present date is that island genius, Generalissimo Doctor Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina.

Here is a name no visitor is likely to forget. The capital, most ancient colonial city of the hemisphere, has had the name the Columbus brothers gave it scrapped in favor of the strong man's own. For if Constantine the Great rechristened Byzantium in honor of himself, why should Santo Domingo boggle at a like event? Ciudad Trujillo—"Trujillo City"—its name is, till further notice and, who knows, the name may stick. The Dominicans themselves do not use it much; they say *la capital* as they probably always have.

No, the discipline is rather for us in the world outside, ignorant of the fact though we may be. The generalissimo, an undisputed titan in his own country, burns to be thought great elsewhere. In my Monte Cristi hotel there were four pictures of the benefactor in the parlor and one of Archimedes. But such notice is not enough. The four Trujillos glared at the one old Greek who, among them, was the man with an international reputation.

Happily, Trujillo's fame is growing. Carleton Beals has spread it in the Sunday supplements with such art as to make the best

of us hesitate to turn out lights at bedtime. In Santo Domingo, we must believe, the benefactor is under every bed; no whisper of derogation goes unavenged. He knows all and takes all, or at least a share; for it is the universal rumor that any profitable enterprise in his country must be directly profitable to him.

That Beals has nothing but enormities to report does not mean that the benefactor is not a patriot in the true, if bizarre, Latin sense, nor indefatigable in furthering Santo Domingo's good as he sees it. The scallawag young thief of the Virgin of San Cristóbal's jewels has lived to be decorated by the Pope with the cross of St. Gregory the Great.

As for bridges built and roads made, the tolls may go now into Trujillian pockets, but the things themselves exist at last for present and future use. The harbor improvements are the admiration of Caribbean shipping. In the production of that staple, rice, the Dominicans at last are self-sufficient: Trujillo may grow it, but the irrigation that I saw brightening the desert valley of the Yaque del Norte with a water-loving crop, will outlive him, if the valley people have any gumption. Unbedeviled by thorns, beggars, and scorpions, at last, the ruins of the palaces and churches of America's oldest colony display themselves in apple-pie good order. And as for peace, who can read of the frantic tumult of Dominican history without a grudging obeisance to the man who has trussed her up and keeps her in a settled posture?

Yes, it is an era of good works. At Dajabón, during my year in the islands, some thousands of Haitian laborer squatters were killed by the military and burnt in piles; it is immigrants of white blood, not black, that are called for by the present policy of uplift. I see it yet, the great gate of Dajabón beetling over the Massacre River: here ended the highroad that progress had built. It was a mere track that led askew to the bridge beyond, and into

the Black Republic. Overhead in the morning wind the Dominican flag flapped smartly.

MONGOOSE

As for Haiti, across the bridge—oldest of the Latin-American republics—I soon found that in it I had not got away from dictatorial government nor the military. Very tedious the rules and regulations were. But though the required permits to come and go gave me rather more than enough pompous intercourse with the *Garde d'Haïti*, it was not the "Psst!" saying sort of army. No camera was snatched from my hands at a baseball game by an infantryman pretending to do his duty, whereas actually he was curious, like a child, to peer through the little finder. My one serious brush with the Haitian military was of another kind.

High on a ridge in the northern plateau is Plaisance, the seat of a dukedom in Christophe's time, but now a humble enough town. It has a church through which the clouds drift, and a bustling cantonment; and here, peremptorily, my car was stopped by a lieutenant of the *Garde* who made no bones about his expectation that I would give him a ride to Port-au-Prince. Nor was I backward in bidding him to "mount." Politeness and prudence called for nothing less.

But it was to prove no mere politic kindness. Instead of driving off at once, we paused for a luncheon served by his sister, a girl of striking beauty. Perfect of bronze skin, willowy, and tall, and with inch hoops of gold in her neat-moulded ears, she mixed the salad with habitual French care. Ste. Beuve's essays, Molière's plays, stood on the shelf.

As for the drive, it was gruellingly long. But we stopped awhile in Gonaïves, that parched wooden city on its Mesopotamian

plain, to call on relatives, and again in St. Marc for the same purpose. I was stared at or taken to by more than one small niece that day. And after dark, when it was easy to be uninhibited, the lieutenant and I broke into a long series of duets while the car bounced along among the boulders. *Rigoletto* and *Aïda* were rifled of their most melodious gems; he awed me with an aria from *Der Rosenkavalier* and followed this with the *Second Hungarian Rhapsody*, burlesqued with no small musical wit. I even heard a Haitian ditty or two from him, though he deprecated these as vulgar.

Thus harmoniously we rode through Arcahaie, past the Stinking Springs, and so to Port-au-Prince very late at last. And when I think of the lieutenant now or get a Christmas greeting from him, I have more to remember than his preliminary curt request and pistol.

The dictator I never saw. I do not recall even seeing pictures of the man. Haiti has had a wealth of tyrants in its day, from those early genuinely grand ones, Toussaint, Dessalines, Christophe, to those more recent and less picturesque, the embezzlers of the public funds. But in this land whose history is somber with clotted mulberry-red blood and pig-eyed feats of selfishness, how had the ragged peasants managed to retain so ancient an air of happiness? Even the presidency, embezzlers nothwithstanding, seemed to have built for itself a tradition of earnest dilettantism, as if Haiti were a New World China where the official was expected also to be a poet.

When, sipping something on Madame Fraenkel's flowery veranda, I bothered to read the papers, the legislative summaries were always soothing. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, after a routine rubber-stamping of the *procès verbal*, the senate discussed the erection of monuments to the national heroes. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, with eloquence no less stirring, pensions were voted to living bigwigs. Meanwhile the presi-

dent governed without frivolous interference and had time beside to devote to the muse.

But if I never got a glimpse of this serviceable recluse, I did chance on a memorial to the man—nor was it one decreed tactfully by the senate. In Kenskoff, where he had a summer villa, a very short bridge had just been built over a very small rill that tumbles through the turf; and since even such unremarkable novelties have importance in the mountains, the workmen had scratched the date of it in the fresh concrete, and added, *Président Vincent bon papa, le Magistrat Declasse bon garçon.** To read an inscription so good-natured first made me smile, then reminded me of the neon-light screamers of Santo Domingo, where *Dios y Trujillo*—"God and Trujillo"—is spelled out as if the citizen's well-being depended on blatant adulation.

The amenities of this Haitian scheme, in fact, with president writing poetry, senate discussing monumental art, and people digging their fields communally to the brisk tumult of drums, I rather liked. And I still do. I am interested in poetry myself, and monuments, God knows, and gardening. Or the Tortola scheme has its merits, in which responsibility is unloaded cheaply on one competent foreign-hired official.

But never would I be that Tortolian dictator in the white sun helmet. Tea with the vicar and his wife and the agricultural director and *his* wife is too narrow a social round for me. Nor will anybody ever catch me living in a sentry-guarded wedding cake, as President Vincent must. I want to lend a hand with the nets when the bonito run, and be pestered by the children's stopping in to swap stamps and look at pictures.

The truth is, of course, as probably you have guessed by now, that my hope is that my island will run itself, and as naturally as if uninhabited. For though I believe in the necessity of law, and respect the usefulness of rewards and penalties, I neither want to

* "President Vincent, sugar daddy, Magistrate Declasse, old pal old pal old pal."

govern nor be governed. Goodness itself should be law and recompense enough, in which interplay of precept and well-being my angel-islanders and I shall find our peace.

But if, for variety some day, cussedness should infect the ant-like tranquillity of our social scheme, and the Golden Rule carved on our cliff take on a tinge of the sarcastic, why abandon these things for others notoriously shaky? Dictator-saviours die at last and leave matters more open to mismanagement than before. But their bags of tricks are any citizen's to use: thus, when my fellows show symptoms of unrest, out I shall pop some festival or expedition, with banners to wave, uniforms to wear, songs, oratory, parades, dancing—not to forget the bottled goods and victuals. Bread and circuses are the classic remedy; I like them both very much myself, especially when homemade. Or if military alarms seemed more in order, a Barbados Ship could well be organized, to divert the urge healthily to burlesque.

For is the Navigator's art only that of keeping off the rocks? Must the Ship of State forever be steered in a panic among immediate dangers? Good navigation keeps the vessel not merely off but away from reefs. In our hearts at least, and thank heaven for it, we can run grandly before the wind, with the Happy Island the home port toward which every sail is straining.

Chapter XIV.

FOR REVERY, GRAVEYARDS ONCE WERE thought to be the appropriate setting: among the monuments to brief lives, things immortal should take on proper stature. It seems a romantic notion now, if not silly. A busier generation indulges its small turn for revery while waiting for traffic lights to change from red to green. However, in old St. Anthony's burying ground, one morning in Montserrat, I was musing in the Victorian way when two colored boys came by, whistling at the top of their lungs, and so interrupted the enterprise for a while.

One was named Loomis. He was a show-card writer who had learned his art by correspondence with a school in Louisville, a lean doleful chap with a gold tooth in front. The other, aptly (for he was very chesty), was named Samson. He was a barber but did not take his work too seriously, I think; at any rate the Montserratians that morning could go unshaved for all of him: there was time not only for the sea bath they had come for but a chat with the visitor, sitting on a grave-slab among the lilies.

Like the faithful tombstone designer that I am, I had been enjoying a busman's holiday, examining the epitaphs, and piously reflecting on Gladstone's dictum that a people's civilization can be gauged by the way it treats its dead—a boost for which the trade ever since has been pathetically grateful. But it was a

pleasure to be interrupted, and Samson's rough-and-tumble looks reminded me that other professions than mine give clues to a people's place on the ladder upward. Barbering, too—his line—could serve. In a word, I found myself telling the boys about my last haircut, which I had got in French St. Martin.

In St. Martin there was no barbershop. The island is a flyspeck on maps when not omitted altogether, for which reason perhaps no barber has taken a pole there and set up business. But Jean the hotel boy told me there was a man in town who could be called in to do a job of haircutting, so I sent him to fetch the fellow.

Jean was always going off and then coming back without having accomplished anything; I looked him up in the pantry by and by and so learned that our barber was out for the present on his daily run to keep in training. He was the heavyweight boxing champion of Santo Domingo, Jean admiringly revealed, and as strong as a young team of mules.

Awed, I awaited a more favorable hour, and when the hero came with kit in one black hammy hand, seated myself submissively in the chair he planted in the hotel's front vestibule. "Cool here," he explained, thumbing hotel patrons to the back. Then crouching over my shrunk-down form, he brandished the scissors in a fanfare of preliminary snips. "Happy to oblige you!" he boomed; "but in Santo Domingo," he went on, taking me by an ear, "my regular job is repairing boilers."

There was no gasp of professional dismay from the Montserrat barber. To him the experience seemed a rare social privilege. "You got a lovely haircut, right enough," he reported, leaning back to admire its neck parts.

"We box, too," said Loomis, doubling his fists at the manly thought. But then he relaxed and a tender, almost lovesick, light came into his face.

"Do you know some of the Hollywood stars?" Samson inquired hopefully, for he had read his friend's mind.

Blushing, I had to admit that such was not my sphere. It seemed incredible to the boys that I could share the continent with these beings without taking advantage of such proximity. Their own dream, it proved, was to add theater management to their existing businesses: Montserrat was yet unbrightened by the cinema except as a tent show came over, now and then, from Antigua. The double bliss of riches and of luscious unrest every performance, during the kissing scenes, opened before them like a gate of gold.

Gold, however, was just what they lacked at present to realize the dream. When the topic came to this leaden dead-end we remembered we were in a graveyard.

The boys rose and shook my hand. "See you later," they called back as they went through the beach-top hedge. And soon, with faded bathing suits knotted around their bodies, they were wading vigorously into the sea.

It was late summer; the pink lilies in a huge profusion half-buried the gravestones under their deep-scented sheaves. An old man was mowing them steadily with his cutlass, but there were thousands left and thousands more were pushing up buds as if life were too abundant in Montserrat for Father Time to curb. Under the lilies and among the tablets, or under the beach-top hedge especially, iguanas rustled: the blue saw-tooth scales down the ridges of their spines gave them a humorous appearance, as if here was the age of dragons safely visible through some telescope's wrong end.

But between old times and this of the dragons' lizardy successors, how many victims of yellow fever, young and unready, had died and been laid away here about me! Hurricanes and earthquakes had dug graves for others; and others again in tranquil old age had come almost of their own accord, leaning on their canes. Peace lapped them around now, all equally. The church drowsed in its grove, the steep mountains, of rich green fissured

with umber landslips, seemed to float above the fields. And monotonously on its dark beach the sea mounted and lapsed, and rushed up and lapsed again. Loomis and Samson were resting, stretched out in the shallows.

Yes, these colonial British graveyards could be domains of quiet. I thought back to Lucea's in Jamaica, on its headland, with spire rising gray over the broad-boughed trees; and of Antigua's cathedral churchyard, where gouty planters and their hoop-skirted ladies lie fast asleep under the classic stones: up the long slope of that latter lawn, birds of a sober feather flocking together, the sexton's turkeys marched, pecking and gobbling, while the two St. Johns, carved atop their respective gateposts, looked out upon the white gables of the city.

Then in my idle brain up rose the mahogany avenues of the old St. Thomas cemetery. In that international port of peace here was the most international corner: the inscriptions were in Danish, Spanish, Russian, Italian, German, Portuguese, English, Dutch, and French. But all these various voices were muted to one level graveyard stillness, like a rustle heard deep in a shell, or the whisper of *death, death,* that the sea raised to the boy Walt Whitman's ear. All languages made the one same inevitable statement.

Father Time here put down his cutlass to rest his bones. I, too, lay back, head on hands on a warm grave ledger, and stared up through the plump twigs of the frangipanis. Memory of the sepulchers at Santiago de los Caballeros in the great mid-valley of Santo Domingo came to mind: they were whited extremely—ornate concrete pastry work, whose Street of the Dead at the end of town unbrokenly continued the main street of the living. To imagine the old carriages that drove out of some Poe's tale into the Santiago streets at night, lamps streaming candle grease and horses all ribs, galloping on down this street of mausoleums was a fancy shudderingly delicious. But the gates were shut by

that hour. The moon, lighting the two cities with impartial brilliance, glittered in the beaded wreaths and turned the urns and pediments to sculptured snow. Peering through, in my revery, I felt the chill of the gate bars on my cheeks again.

Or the graveyards of the Haitian hinterlands—what would Gladstone have said of their antique piety? It was sad to realize that at the sight of the calabash bowls of meal that I had seen so often, left as offerings in the niches of the tombs—the cups of drink, the candle stubs—he would have let the word "Superstition!" agitate his sideburns.

And true it is, too, that the most numerous spirits and two of the chief gods of the Voodoo pantheon dwell in these church-blessed precincts. Before the great cross that rises Christianly above all lives the god of cemeteries, dwarf Baron Samedi, master of the souls of those slain by magic. Behind it drunkenly sleeps Gèdé, the grave-digger god, rum-loving and scandalmongering. While the white gentlefolk of Antigua's cathedral churchyard are at their slumbers and the turkeys flock untroubled on the turf above, the Haitian dead are astir: they feed at posterity's expense and are included symbolically in family affairs, or, angrily roaming the night fields and steep coffee thickets, they visit their grudges on the impious, with disease, ill luck, and melancholy.

Here the iguanas broke into a sudden scamper; Loomis and Samson, twirling their wet suits, passed below the hedge on their way back into town. "Sea bath feel too good to end!" they called; whereupon, by undisciplined transition, recollection of swimming frolics crowded into my head.

With Glanville Smith I dived into the sapphire brine again, off Coki Point: in St. Thomas I had chanced on a colored taxi-driver of exactly my own name, to celebrate which odd event we rode off for an afternoon's bathing in Smith's Bay. But Coki Bay was finer. The blue of its depths as we swam through the liquid radiance, a white fish and a brown, I think of still with wonder.

Or, for green water, there was Englishman's Bay on the north coast of Tobago. Herons waded along the pink crescent of its sands; annatto flowers wagged their lemon-colored faces in the breeze. At the beach ends the high rocks were draped in the tapestry of vines and wide-branched foliage: thank heaven the world was shut away from that dangerously perfect place! But the great Orinoco, for a continental reminder, dyed the blue sea with its yellow at Englishman's Bay, a hundred miles from its nearest mouth. My submarine wallowings were in a light half emerald, half amber.

Then I thought of the Calabash Bay brown water babies who had taught me to coast in like a gargoyle projecting from the parapet of a breaking wave; and of Jason Apperly in a hill torrent of his Dominíca, tickled to giggling by the bubbles that seethed up about him; and then of the lonesome Arima River in Trinidad, dropping from cool pool to pool under the bamboos and the jutting banks. Drowsing on a silk-smooth boulder there in mid-stream, as I drowsed now among these lilies, I had watched a butterfly of Brazilian blue flap by on wings as broad as sandwiches.

Then without even the effort of sitting up I was hunching my shoulders happily in a St. Lucian warm spring. My small guides, on the bank above, wriggled in anticipation of their turns, and blew crystalline bugle calls on hollow leaf-stems from a papaya. And next day they led me to a waterfall that flowed hot on one side, cold on the other: it was a freak so pleasant that when I tried it I resolved my island positively must have one.

But these St. Lucian waters were of a gentle temperature. In Nevis, at the old Bath House, I had laid my startled length in something decidedly more peppery. After I had staggered up again in fact, and raised a limp hand to a towel, the puzzle was to know how to finish sweating. Heaven help me! what a freshet! There was no half-cold waterfall, no cool water at hand whatever, and no servant to bring any in the emergency. For the planters of Antigua, Barbados, or St. Kitts, who took the cure in the old Madeira-quaffing days, had departed this life long since, in spite of the relief from gout the waters gave them. They and their liveried valets and powdered ladies, and the breath of fashion that these people had brought the spa, had gone away; the vaulted chambers and high airy galleries were guestless except for one military invalid and me.

The Baños de Coamo in Puerto Rico I had found more contemporary in their convenience. But like Nevis's, here was an establishment very old. The thick masonry had stood up against a century or two of hurricanes.

While the maids of Spanish times opened the giant faucets and drove stoppers as big as rolling pins into the giant drains, the *caballeros* had jested coarsely, pulling off their tight spurred boots. And then, though saddle-tired muscles eased in the marble tub where now I floated, faces must have hardened and grown pensive. Men came to Coamo for more than baths in the gay old times: stakes were high in the candlelit hot casino.

Or their pouting *señoras* had been my predecessors, obese from too great a passion for poached eggs in their broth. What dreams had bloomed in the bath-heated imagination of the ladies, I wondered, as they rolled pneumatically in this cozy old sarcophagus?

Yes, the old spa had the flavor in it of other times. The parlor was a lesson in Spanish etiquette; as for the dining room, painted

with pompously scroll-framed moon-struck landscapes, here was the original of the "interior" at whose cardboard glories, in the Davidson Opera House at home, I had gawked so many times with small-boy awe. I went through the heavy menu once again, lying in the Montserrat graveyard, and heard the spry old waiter wheeze, "Fish, sir?" formally at my elbow.

But fish and formality indeed! A more immediate recollection smote me and made me sit up with a jerk. The Commissioner was to entertain at Coconut Hill this very night. I must put on a collar and attend. Would I be expected to take a place at a bridge table perhaps?—a thought so anxious that a sweat like Nevis's burst out on my back.

It was a needless perspiration. Bridge was not obligatory that night. My new bow tie as much as tied itself; it was of a red shade as was also the cummerbund I wore around my middle. Items so daring, amid the British black, set the girls' eyes in a sparkle. And having planted the flag of fashion Columbus-like in their insular world, I basked in the sensation caused without mentioning that these things were novelties also to the wearer.

But insularity need not imply rusticity. The butlers with courtly tread handed the trays of whisky-and-soda and excellent iced coffee, the lamps roared, and the bridge tables showed with what refinement the cave-man lust for blood can be endued. There was "hearts" and there was fortunetelling, with well-modulated Creole laughter and urbane repartee; and then finally an elegant supper on well-shined mahogany.

Meanwhile, and while I amused the young ladies in their swishy frocks, or discussed church music with the white-thatched canon (he wrote anthems) or heeded the remarks of the dapper inspector of the port, the picture would fade suddenly from before my eyes, and quite as if I were in a proper graveyard scene again an impolite spell of revery would seize me. Recollection of an-

other party on that same day and island would push imperiously into mind.

Beyond the town, and past St. Anthony's, a beach follows all the way to Bransby Point. Worrying about the new tie and the evening's social responsibilities, I had walked the brown sands that afternoon from bay to bay, around cliffs that beetled close to the wash. But always the next bay looked pleasanter for a swim; until, in silhouette against the dazzling sea-polish laid down by the sun, I saw some bathers ahead who might make me company. Watching my footing over a stony ridge, I came down courteously to ask to join them.

The request was never made. Suddenly thunderstruck, I stood rooted in my tracks.

Uprooted violently from theirs were my intended bath mates. These two bronze Adams and their two bronze Eves sprinted in search of a fig tree as if a vice-squad car had tooted its horn in Eden. But before shame had found a covering one Adam turned a cartwheel and came up bellowing: "It's only the tombstone man from America!" For it was not Adam but Samson with Loomis and a pair of girl-friends. One good sea bath that day had led to another on a more ambitious scale.

Was ever tombstone designer taken captive before by libertine tritons and their mermaids? Probably not, I surmised hurriedly, while Enid twitched my shirttails out.

"You give us a fright at first," said Dorthy cheerfully, draping a crown of seaweed on my unaccustomed brow. "We thought you was the inspector of the port.—Not that he would make

trouble for poor girls like us," she went on, while Loomis fetched the rum. "Not *police* trouble, I mean. But he think he got a lease on me, and if find me out with Samson . . ."

"Sure would be a fight!" Samson cried, beaming completely from head to toe. And up on one shoulder he swung the inspector's faithless doxy.

"Gentlemen sure can act unreasonable," she mused, rubbing Samson's belly with her heels. "Inspector don't want me to regale myself with nobody but him."

"Have a rum," said Loomis, wiping the cup clean with his finger. My Adam's apple pumped and tears sprang to my eyes: it was the local brand, poured from a dim naphtha bottle.

But Enid had been seized by an inspiration. "Mr. Tombstones will snap our photo!" she screeched. "Samson, put Dorthy down and stand all in a row."

"O.K.!" sang out Samson; "let me get my ukulele."

"Ukulele? what for?" grumbled Loomis. For "live pictures" were his private business: such wares found a good market in the London underworld. "Those guys want action!" he protested.

"We develop the films ourself," explained Dorthy, coolly, bringing the camera from behind a rock. And in a row the two couples stood:—Samson with his chest out and one arm lightly around Dorthy; and lank Loomis, his gold tooth glittering, with pert Enid who had one front tooth gone.

"My specialty is epitaphs," I warned them, gingerly fingering the camera. I had thought to find it hot. "But if a Dominican boilermaker can cut hair," I went on, adjusting myself to the occasion, "I guess an American tombstone man can take a photograph. Look pleasant please, ladies and gentlemen! Now hold it!" Snap!

"Whoopee!" cried Samson, turning another cartwheel.

Loomis was bursting with further plans. This would put money in his pocket. "Mister, you just got us going," he crowed. And

while my subjects piled up or sprawled out like a basket of puppies, in poses that they hoped would look audacious, or played leapfrog or rode pickaback, or lay in the wash of the waves in a row of alternate muscularity and soft curves, I knelt, clambered on rocks for bird's-eye views, or plunged after them into the sea to snap the shutter.

Samson had brought "the gloves": Dorthy and Enid, with much noisy coaching, staged a feminine boxing match. The boys then posed in sporting-page positions, and followed with some show-off boxing of their own. Panting and dizzy after these various exertions, everybody dropped on the sand to rest.

But Samson, that deep reservoir of life, soon sat up and reached for his ukulele. Leaning back on Dorthy, he tuned the strings, and in accents as like the movie crooners as he could manage sang "Dancing Cheek to Cheek." For the hinty longing of the American love songs is new and beautiful to the colored islanders; their own songs—the carnival ditties, the Trinidad calypsos—tell of an open, unbalked, unromantic kind of passion; and though they respond readily to the strong rhythms of this island music and guffaw at its rowdy texts, it no longer seems refined. The sweet music of Tin Pan Alley is more stylish.

Cheek to cheek indeed! Here in full sunlight was Samson, leaning back naked on his naked girl, and crooning the wistful songs of a city where love blooms covertly behind pulled-down shades. The scene lacked modesty, no doubt about it.

"You play the uke, Dorthy," I proposed. "Lean on Sam and please let me put a frangipani flower over your little ear. We'll make that the last picture." Mixing of blood in long Irish Montserrat can breed bronze variations on the Celtic theme, and this couple typified their beauty at its best. Enid's heritage was less happy, but she was a jolly girl and so, not wishing to leave her with her feelings hurt, I brought back a double handful of hot

high-beach sand to where she lay, and sifted it slowly down her belly. "Feel good?" I inquired. She wiggled in a rapture.

At Coconut Hill there luckily was hot water for a bath. The faucets roared in a resounding tone, in tune with which I found myself singing "Massa's in the Cold Cold Ground." How absurd!

"What if my tombstone clients could see me now?" I mused, lying back to dissolve the sea salt from my hair. As it happened I was thinking of the afternoon, but suddenly a-blush sat up and twitched-to the window shutters.

At the party, presently, white collar around sunburnt neck, and red tie around the collar, I looked quizzically at the inspector of the port. "Our Montserrat products," a kind lady told me, helping me with my West Indian education, "are limes, and long-staple cotton." The parcels that went off to the London picture dealers she ignored, juicier than limes for all their flatness. Or did I have a more complete knowledge than hers of the island's exports?

As for the canon, we toured the English cathedrals, he and I. I was glad to note that it impressed him when I mentioned that among my library's curiosities was the music for Lord Nelson's funeral in St. Paul's in 1805.

"The hero of Trafalgar was married just over the channel here, in Nevis," he boasted, crossing his legs briskly the other way. And the subject of dirges reminded him that he had written a funeral march himself, based on the sea's beat at the foot of his church's burying ground. "I suppose you know your poet Whitman's lines . . ." he hazarded.

I told him that I had thought of them there that very morning. "But someone has pointed out," I went on, for a thought had struck me, "that Orpheus's great aria, in the opera, if sung with joy instead of pathos, would do as well for 'I have found my Eurydice!' as for 'I have lost' her."

"No! no! a sacrilege!" he demurred.

"But my thought was," I persisted, "that the waves that run up your long brown beach may be whispering, not '*death, death,*' but '*life, life, life.*' "

"A beautiful idea!" exclaimed the canon. "You make me pine, almost, to get at next Sunday's sermon. 'Ocean, mighty mother of all things' . . ." he intoned.

But still we were thinking differently of those waves. The waves that I heard there at the Commissioner's urbane party, came whispering with a glint in their roving eyes.

HOW TO LIVE TO A RIPE OLD AGE IN THE TROPICS

Chapter XV.

OF ALL THE ANIMALS, MAN IS BEST ABLE to adapt himself to earth's various uncomfortable climates. Most of us would live in California or Paris if we could; but since this bliss is reserved for the few, the many exist and multiply elsewhere, even if it has to be amid the rigors of dried-up mountains, soggy jungles, Arctic snow fields, or deserts that roast the feet.

The next most adaptable animal, as Gibbon pointed out in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* is the hog. But Gibbon did not pause long in his masterpiece to consider the porcine genius, nor do I intend to do so in mine. For man, to give him his due, is several skips ahead of this nearest rival. Even in the tropics, where clothes, heat, and artificial shelter are unobligatory, and hog thus might hope to live on equal terms with man, he doesn't: over the superior animal's charcoal fire his hams, as usual, cook till tender.

Adaptable though the race may be, its habit is to migrate around the globe according to its original latitudes. The American pioneers, as a rule, drove due west in their covered wagons, Yankees to my Minnesota, Tennesseeans to Arkansas. In the larger migrations, the dark denizens of the tropics stick to the hot places;

the swart subtropicals are found in the subtropics still; we North-European blonds, even when we go to Australia, choose its temperate parts for the new home and let the torrid parts stay empty.

However, this is only a general rule. As soon as they learn of Harlem, certainly, the black Africans go there if they get the chance. And not yet have I read statistics ominous of the extinction of that slum colony. A thousand miles from their natural tropics, its inhabitants stand the cold because they love the life; babies are born to grow up and produce more babies, as methodically as if New York were in Dahomey.

We whites, on the other hand, regard ourselves as more delicate. If we exchange apple orchards for nutmeg groves, we invite a quick racial decline: in two or three generations, limp, impotent, and gibbering, we die: such is the nasty picture.

But stop! wait! are we whites not the most excellent of mankind? If blacks can survive in Harlem, why should we fail in Trinidad? Prometheus, an early (and an able) white man, fetched down the fire from heaven for our conquest of the cold; our scientists, now, and much better paid too, have fetched down ice. Some day, no doubt about it, we shall build cities in the tropics artificially cooled, as cities in the North for ages have been warmed. Rather than hurrying to church in an overcoat, as we do in the North, we shall peel, and trip over in a sort of fairy underwear, to be met by an usher with a wool cloak suitable to the services and the church's healthful chill.

Another means to our physical salvation might be the breeding in of tropical blood, as the Jamaicans cross their cattle with the zebu to make them heat-resistant. The Harlem colony, as is no secret, softens the climate to its offspring by diverting toward it the talisman of northern blood. But whereas the Negro can have white blood among his assets and be a Negro still, we whites do not permit ourselves a like precaution in the tropics. In our eyes, one

whisk of the tarbrush, seven generations back, is enough to queer us.

It seems an unproud position for a proud race to maintain. If white blood is so inestimably superior to black, even a little of it ought to amend gallons of the latter.

Here it must be remarked, nevertheless, that while air conditioning is yet a thing of the future in the West Indies, the saving vigor of mixed blood, though no guarantee of social acceptability, is an old, well-tried, and widely enjoyed benefit. Black blood, like the zebu's, gives heat-resistance, white gives mental quickness. Such, that is, is the opinion. But when I heard the most celebrated of the Nassau lawyers (a colored man, and a colored man is the cleverest lawyer in Jamaica) diabolically confounding white opposing lawyers' arguments, I wondered whether his cunning had come altogether from the "right end of the blanket."

If we allowed such mixed-bloods the name of white in the black world of the isles, as in the white world of the North we call them black, the waves of immigration that swept in from Europe only to sink away, would perhaps seem not so futile as they now do to white historians and geographers. I should guess that there is as much white blood in the Antilles now as ever. Only, of course, it flows for the most part in the veins of colored people.

But even without the aid of mixed blood or an artificially cooled architecture, is it a certainty that we whites must languish in the tropics? Is the self-acknowledged premier race of the world nearer allied to the hog in point of climate adaptability than the sooty Africans?

No! For never let it be said that this inquirer, in whose veins courses no corpuscle not authentically Scotch, Dutch, or English, failed, while in the isles, to collect data to disprove an opinion

both so widespread and so humiliating. My findings herewith follow.

SEAGRAPE TREE AND BOAT TIMBERS

Oceanward, beyond the out-facing eastmost chain of the Bahamas, are some detached islets, among which Harbor Island, Hope Town, New Plymouth, and Spanish Wells have long been inhabited. Rather than settling on the "mainland" of Eleuthera or Abacó, the old colonists built their houses and laid the keels of their sailing vessels on these cays to seaward.

Of all West Indian ports, here are the most oceanic. Across to them drift the glass net floats the Portuguese fishermen use: the immense slow deep-sea current that revolves past Lisbon and around the Sargasso Sea flows by these Bahamian dunes, and the trade wind blows the globular green waifs ashore. I picked one up on Harbor Island beach myself, stripped it of barnacles, and held it to the sun to see its color. For all its common bottle glass, it was a marine creature, a swimmer from the sea toil of the Old World to this sailors' island of the New.

But Harbor Island is an old place in New World terms. The United States Navy's initial exploit, in 1776, was to capture Nassau—not to annex the Bahamas but to seize British stores. The deed done in bungling good order, our squadron retired, whereupon Spain, edging back toward her lost outpost at St. Augustine, moved in in our stead. But not for long. A Carolina loyalist, with forces recruited chiefly in Harbor Island, set the

Union Jack fluttering in its old place again; in thanks for which aid the Crown rewarded the Harbor Islanders with agricultural lands to be held in common on Eleuthera across the bay.

Even now, daybreak sees the port's gardeners setting sail to work those fields; and evening, when the lamplighter climbs to light his beacon, sees them sailing home again over the sunset's mirrored color. With the gurgle of brine in the wharf timbers, up comes the sound of tropical Cockney, where yams and firewood and bananas are being unloaded: the islanders misplace their *h's* and reverse their *v's* and *w's* as scrupulously as do the Wellers in *Pickwick Papers.*

But Harbor Island is not so much like England as it is New England. The boiled dinners there, of salt beef and cabbage, were a happy Down East surprise. The Protestant tin tones of the church bells, the deep Sabbath calms, the Cape Cod cottages and white picket fences, were all in the best Yankee tradition.

However, it was like the New England of an older time, when "ring games" were the young folks' fun, and maritime rather than industrial affairs busied their elders. Boats are the island preoccupation: yachts that are the colony's pride are built on the harbor beach. When school is out, down pelt the children hoping to be allowed to stir the paint or perhaps to steady a mast that, laid on the grass, is being planed to a fine tapering slimness by some uncle or big brother. The tots meanwhile rig boats of coconut husks: their world has no wheeled vehicle in it to distract interest from the marine.

Young Charles Sweeting, with sailor cap perched above his sunny face, one afternoon took me sailing. As usual, it was boats he talked of, I urging him on; for the topic, with its salty sea terms, is one of the best on earth for wholehearted rhapsody. When he spoke of the *Pieces-of-Eight* or the Bishop's trim *St. Mary of Stafford*, whose building he had watched, a greensickness came over him such as dizzied poor Pepys when the string band divinely

fell to playing. The boat we were in he handled centaur-like, as if he and it were all one vigorous animal.

"Hard-a-lee!" he would sing out in a voice like a cheery trumpet; and when the breeze caught us and we tipped up and flew lolloping over the turquoise brine, he looked as full of mastery as a commodore. "If I could sail around the world in a little boat like this," he interrupted a song to cry, "I'd never forget her! I'd put her up when she was old, and I . . . I . . . I'd paint her *every day*!"

Such poetry and such a sea enthusiasm sent a chill of pleasure up my spine. It was as if I had come to Salem in the days when the sea fever burnt so ardently in the young New England blood.

But in Harbor Island there were things that would have looked odd in Salem. "Goats and Coconuts" said the sign on the wharf-head warehouse. When old Mr. Ingraham brought me a bag of fruit, as he often and kindly did, it was not New England apples but tropic-sweet sapodillas, the flesh at their hearts as smooth to the tongue as butter. Mrs. Sweeting, when she baked, retired to the back garden among cannas and huge wine-red Nassau lilies and fired an outdoor oven. "I put dry palm blossoms on top of the wood," she told me, "for the 'flare.'"

Despite the boiled dinners, her cooking also had a non-New England flavor. In hot places, so they say, the fading appetite needs hot condiments to revive it: the Jamaican and Caymanian sauces that stand innocently on the dinner tables of old families set a visitor's eyes to streaming, no doubt about that; Mrs. Sweeting's macaroni and cheese was peppery indeed.* Or perhaps the lack of refrigeration in the old days helped to breed a taste for the fiery: Cayman and the Bahamas, where the taste is most pronounced—far more so than in the Spanish islands—were too poor

* At banquets in Antigua in the eighteenth century, a pepper-pod was put at each guest's plate for a zest refresher.

in well water to afford even that minor aid in cooling. Pepper was a preservative.

Least of all like New England, however, were the community's Negroes. At first I was surprised to find them there. They seemed out of place. But by the time I had learned to enjoy Mr. Ingraham's buttery dillies, I had grown used to seeing black tots as well as white ones sailing coconut boats, and black laborers returning at sunset from the Eleutherian fields across the bay. What surprised me then was to observe how few of them there were.

Nassau, for all its old aristocracy, is a black city as anybody who has sauntered Bay Street on a Saturday night must agree. The Bahamas as a whole, in fact, are black. But here at Harbor Island there were as many whites as Negroes: such a proportion is white indeed in the Antilles, where the normal thing (except in olive-skinned Cuba and Puerto Rico) is to find two hundred black and tans for every dozen white people.

Hope Town, the *Alice Mable's* captain had told me, maintains an ideal even more exclusive; Negroes are given rough welcome there. As for Spanish Wells, it is "pure white"; the laboring class on that market-garden cay is as Caucasian as the banker class is in Nassau. I watched the Wells' sunburnt boatmen one day, in faded blue shirts and trousers, fetching out baskets of vegetables and papayas to our city-bound vessel, and very tough, merry, and sinewy they were, with bare feet braced in the strain of bringing their cargoes alongside in the flowing tide.

But even at Harbor Island, where there were Negroes in plenty for manual labor, the white citizens persisted in doing their share of it. Yacht building and repairs most emphatically were not delegated to black hands. Nor did Mrs. Sweeting turn the arts of her kitchen over to anyone but her own capable self. Mr. Ingraham sent no slavey for the sapodillas, but trudged into the country for them on his own old feet.

After I had noticed this, I noticed the wide gap between the

drawn, evidently, in sexual as well as yacht-building affairs. As for a spiritual division, the last Wesleyan minister had tried to thaw out the racial coldness present: all souls being white, as we whites say, why should the house of souls be entered by a more honorable and less honorable door? The upshot of this front-door back-door business was, that he soon preached to few but black ears, and so left the charge less thawed-out than ever.

Tired of being cut off from their white neighbors either as intimates or indispensable servants, the black Harbor Islanders have fallen back on the inferior reputation assigned to them and tease their white superiors a little with petty theft. Their ancestors were the slaves of the ancestors of the island whites; this obscure community on its dunes by the revolving ocean, has had more than two centuries in which to come to equilibrium. So also have Hope Town and Spanish Wells. Since these communities have survived so long, their habits cannot be dismissed as merely pleasant or unpleasant. They have practical significance. With which thought to chew on, we set sail for Saba.

Saba, a Dutch island to the east of the Anegada Passage, makes a show on maps, because for all its small circumference it sticks too high into the air for the cartographers to overlook. One of the Antilles' best and oldest jokes is that Saba's capital, at the top of a toilsome nine-hundred-foot series of flagstone stairs, is called The Bottom. But "the bottom" it is, in Saban terms; the other towns are all up farther flights—St. John's, Windward Side, or (nearest to heaven of all) Hell's Gate.

Up these formidable stairs a few circus horses have been trained to climb. The captain of my ship had hired the lot for

himself, his Dutch guests, Dutch wife, and dainty small Dutch daughter. The party viewed their mounts with some trepidation and the road ahead with more: horses' backs at home stayed usually at a level. Poor Netherlanders! their trip up was anxious enough, but when Dobbin turned 'round and skipped downstairs with rump up and head in China, there was nothing to do but cover the eyes with one hand and catch at the saddle with the other.

Unhampered by a horse, I got on much more nimbly. Here was The Bottom, with morning's dews yet fresh upon it—a town half provision garden in a hollow. And here was Windward Side on its ridge, another nine hundred feet nearer to the sky. In illimitable miles of bright sun glitters the Caribbean quivered far below; up from its surf the steep cliffs leaned, then steep slopes of grass studded with bursts of sisal; next, tropical shrubs, woods growing at a frightful angle, and then pastures more moderately tilted. And here was the town and I puffing into it, while Saba's peak still loomed above, piercing a soft mist of cloud.

What a town! For sweet looks it was a veritable lollipop. Begonias and slim crocuses bloomed atop the mossy walls, fat cows posed majestically in paddocks the size of parlor carpets. As for the houses, so spotless-white, with their masonry gable ends and hooded chimneys—their shutters, iron lamps, picket gates, and flowers—obviously they had been grouped as they were to stage an operetta. At the proper signal in some blithe overture, every door should have sprung open and out of each should have danced tenor and soprano sweethearts, kicking their feet in reckless unison and trilling:

Try the Golden Rule, folks,
No need of feeling blue:
Come to Saba,
Love your neighba—
I . . . love . . . you!

But there seemed to be no performance scheduled for that morning. Instead, sheds were being painted, gardens were being weeded, windows were being washed. On verandas pretty girls in their prettiest frocks were busy at the drawn work for which the island is famous.

Fronting a flowery lane—a shank's-mare world requires no streets—was a general store. Feeling somewhat uncouth, I entered. Frilled curtains hung at the well-polished windows, the scrubbed floor was as white underfoot, almost, as the fresh-painted low ceiling was overhead. The place, in fact, seemed too nice to last. In spite of the real kerosene and the real soap chips for sale, it seemed related to a general store at home much in the way Marie Antoinette's dairy would to a Minnesota dairy. These pretty looks, however, like the sweet looks of the town, were no smirk aimed at the tourist trade. Not two hundred strangers climb to Windward Side in a year. Nor were they signs of a more abundant life decreed and financed by the government at The Hague. Such amenities are habitual in Saba.

The hospitable amenities are remembered also. I had not been in Windward Side ten minutes before I was sipping a cup of coffee in somebody's house up five flowery tiers of terraces. Cookies came with it, served by the young ladies of the family; my host and I clinked glasses of rich berry wine. "Good health and long life!" was the toast we drank.

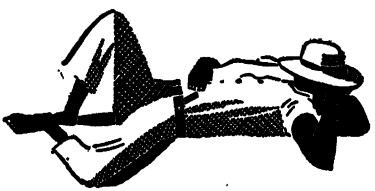
But good health and long life are commonplace things on the island. It is an old colony, of a history generally serene. In 1700 it was a community of cobblers: the very governor made shoes, and the Lutheran pastor, too, gossip said. But the sea now, the wide world over, gives the Saban men their trade.

While husbands and fathers go to sea, wives and daughters stay at home: it is a woman-managed world, which undoubtedly explains why it is so orderly and pretty. For the men are gone

years at a time; their island has no harbor to make a port for vessels of their own, thus they sail on the ships of the outside world. But their savings come home regularly, which with the pin money the women's needlework will fetch, comfortably supports the colony.

But Saba has not only its ships' officers and seamen and its home-staying women but Negroes too, in about Harbor Island's proportion. They are the island porters: when a Hell's Gate citizen orders a set of Shakespeare, it has to be carried up on somebody's head from the beach landing at the real bottom of the stairs. No West Indian island has sunnier or politer blacks than these Saban athletes. But blacks they are, not light-browns. They inhabit The Bottom for the most part, while the upper towns are reserved by the white islanders for themselves.

Though they find it useful, Negro aid is something the white Sabans can do without; competence is their common virtue. Work degrades nobody. And where every errand or Sunday call involves climbing some mountain staircase, hearts grow as leathery as boxing gloves. Exercise and sea winds keep cheeks from growing pasty. People live to a great age in Saba, whatever may be their color.



"*But,*" I hear you grumble, "if these Sabans live on the top of a mountain, no wonder their cheeks are rosy. They live above the heat. As for Harbor Island and those other white settlements in the Bahamas, they are not in the tropics at all; they are as far north as Miami."

True enough. I have not cited the most impressive examples,

perhaps.* But if Harbor Island won't do, what of Cayman? Well blistered by an authentically tropic sun, that colony, together with its customs, industry, food, speech, and proportion between black and white, very nearly duplicates the Bahamian out-island. The sunburnt boatmen of Cayman Brac and Spanish Wells might easily be brothers. The Caymanian women, again, vigorously dispatch their housework, independent to a marked degree of black help. I see Mrs. Jones now, on a ladder, knocking down breadfruit for my dinner.

As for lofty Saba, its near neighbor St. Barts is a whiter island though not half so high. Moreover the white Normans there live generally at sea level where the heat is greatest.

Laborious farmers, herders, hat weavers, and fishermen, the St. Bartians are downright peremptory in their independence of Negro help. They hold aloof from the few colored townsmen and do their own sweating. As for maintaining the race, they have managed that since the mid-seventeenth century, never guessing that it was supposed to be impossible. Instead of succumbing to the climate, they have planted their children elsewhere in it when St. Barts itself grew overcrowded. The Cha Chas of St. Thomas are such an overflow, notorious in their new home, even disliked, for their humble standards of life, tireless industry, and the bull-dog grip they keep on their racial independence.

For a tombstone designer to solve ethnographic puzzles is rash indeed. But why not try? My guess is that in these successful white colonies the saving element is *work*; and by this I mean not tasks managerial or professional such as have always been performed in the tropics by the whites, but the work that demands bodily exertion. In our tombstone man's judgment it paves the

* A. Grenfell Price, whose excellent study of *White Settlers in the Tropics* has been published since this chapter was written, declares that Saba and Miami both enjoy the true tropical climate. He also says that the Sabans have dyspepsia from eating too many biscuits. But his findings in the Caribbean often parallel mine, I am relieved to note; and though his conclusions are cautiously reserved, they do not conflict with those made by this unscientific visitor.

way toward survival for two reasons—that it is healthful in itself, despite long tradition to the contrary, and that it discourages the native Tropicals from an overwhelming multiplication.

"Sweating very healthy!" the darkys say, suiting the action to the word. And healthy they are, and so are the white Saban housewives or white market gardeners of Spanish Wells. Lady Nugent, the famed diarist of old Jamaica, was in a constant panic over her husband the governor: while his colleagues reclined in the shade to drink sangaree and complain of the heat, Sir George galloped about discharging his arduous duties without regard for climate. It was the daily miracle in Kingston that this strenuousness did not kill him, when men so much more careful of their health were dying like flies. "He worked himself to death," people said, I suppose, when he succumbed at the age of ninety-two.

Yes, the history of the black islands, such as Jamaica, has been of white people who turned the exertions of life over to the Negroes. It was a natural inclination, reinforced by the best medical advice. And it was a point of pride: managing an estate was more honorable (and still is thought to be so) than husking coconuts. To be top crust in society was to be white, and to be white was to be in the sedentary rather than the laborious professions.

If the top crust of a community in the North had to marry wholly within itself and could not dip down now and then for the refreshment of middle-class or chorus-girl blood, would it keep its bloom I wonder? But if the Jamaican top crust dips one sixteenth of an inch beneath itself, it dips into the stratum of the colored—which dipping God forbid! For the Jamaicans are as rigid in preserving the color line as the white Sabans are, even though (unlike the Sabans) they are all but overwhelmed by their inferiors.

Somehow the Saban color line seems more genuine and less

thankless. Where the tradition of honorable toil extends back to the days when the governor himself made shoes, labor is innately self-reliant. Blacks and whites both work in Saba: the color line is a vertical cleavage. But in Jamaica, Antigua, Barbados, or the other Negro isles, where the whites live on an indispensable foundation of black labor, the color line perforce is horizontal.

Nassau, these years past, has been brightened by an influx of well-to-do sunshine lovers and tax dodgers from the mainland; the new immigrants are as white as snow. But will they whiten Nassau?

I doubt it. Their coming adds to the existing top crust, true enough, but this creates a thousand jobs, say, of the non-top-crust kind. Cooks and garden boys are wanted. But few white Nassauvians are available for such jobs; they belong to the best clubs and if in need of wages are not willing to be seen anywhere but in some office or swank mercantile employment. No, a thousand blacks from Grant's Town over the ridge must be hired, whereupon five thousand Grant's Town babies become economic possibilities. And such possibilities in the isles, believe me, are realities very promptly. Fruitfulness is a natural people's joy. If white employers of black labor flooded into Saba, Saba likewise would be not whiter but more inky.

No, if we are not to be swamped in the tropics by the tropics' own children, we must be militantly self-sufficient. Perhaps the fact that Cuba and Puerto Rico are South European, dominantly, is owing not to the relative kindness of the climate to a swart-skinned people, but to the unprosperousness of these islands in the West Indies' golden age: while such competently-managed colonies as Antigua or Jamaica could afford to buy slaves to do all tasks except those honorable ones reserved at the very top, the ill-governed Puerto Ricans and Cubans had sometimes to continue as blacksmiths or coffee pickers. The honorableness of labor

was in a measure preserved—as it was fully in North European St. Barts, Saba, Cayman, and Harbor Island.

Such at least is my theory. And while busy weaving it, I have learned something about my own island, I perceive—not merely that it could be white if I should decide that would be nice, but what my life must be on it to enjoy it to a ripe old age. Nine bean rows will I have there, well-hoed, and a hive for the honey-bee; when I sink into my hammock in the bee-loud glade and revel in indolence, I shall have earned my rest.

SAILING WITH FATHER NOAH

Chapter XVI.

PROBABLY THE BEST BOOK ON THE WEST Indies—with a sigh I say this—is also one of the oldest, Père Labat's *Voyage*. With another sigh I must admit I haven't read it all: it is one of those roomy works, rich in curious observation, that only the island life gives time to read. But excerpts have brought me some knowledge of this future fun, on rainy days among my books, as well as a strong present sense of the reality of the author.

Père Labat was a man of parts. He was a missionary priest and naturalist, a military man who counted guns on the sly in British ports, and a businessman who, having picked up shoes in Saba and silks dumped in St. Thomas by Captain Kidd, resold them at a good profit to his Martinique parishioners. But under the cassock of this paragon and behind his hawklike eye, was "an extremely witty, charming, and companionable person." His picnics were models of alfresco hospitality, served in the manner of his friends the buccaneers.

The notorious Captain Daniel, in fact, was Père Labat's crony. Rather than kidnapping some priest during a voyage to say Mass on his ship, the captain found it handier and pleasanter to take

one along who loved to go. And this missionary loved it. The buccaneer had his religious side, the priest his sporting side, the upshot of which was that they enjoyed and understood each other.

Thus in Guadeloupe at the Café Gréaux in Pointe-à-Pitre, it was music to my ears to hear that the schooner *Père Labat* was to sail next day on a round trip to Marie Galante. The *Père Labat*! think of that! Jean Gréaux's wine, at six cents the big ice-cooled glass, fired the enthusiasm in my heart. Was the captain's name Daniel by any chance? And with a wallop my fist smote the table top. Here, gentlemen, sat an intending passenger.

Our Minnesota sailor, meanwhile, had been enjoying life ashore. I liked the color of Pointe-à-Pitre: iron roofs, dust, shutters—all blended in one calm blue-gray. Against it the Madras handkerchiefs of the women's turbans glowed like jewels.

Then, the old piety of the city took me. I watched the cathedral bell ringers in their shorts, climbing the ropes monkeylike to time funeral peals. It seemed an antique innocent-hearted way of sending a soul to heaven. Or I followed the woman who tended the shrines along Gosier Highway: from rock cavity to hollow tree she hobbled, adjusting the statuettes and putting fresh nosegays before them day by day, and at night set votive lights to swimming in cups of oil.

Moreover, the ease that descends on a French-governed place where color distinctions are not so ever-present a bogey I found very relaxing as usual, and would peacefully watch mixed-tint soccer games in the park, while some pale-skinned young mother on the bench beside me happily bounced her dark-skinned baby. Sandbox boughs rustled overhead,* seltzer bottles squirted at the sidewalk tables of the Richepanse and Tulipe Rouge. But the Café Gréaux was the bright spot in Pointe-à-Pitre for me because in it I was not looked upon as a stranger.

* This tree's fruit reminded the old colonists of the sandboxes on their desks, from which they sifted sand on fresh-written sheets to dry the ink: blotting paper had not then been invented.

I had arrived in Guadeloupe full of anxiety and quinine. It was even soggier than I had been told; the sky split, that dismal hour; rain poured like Niagara, incessant thunderclaps bombarded the gray iron roofs. But then all at once the attack was over. Dry-clothed, I went back to the quays to watch the storm retire, where very promptly Ferdinand Brin and I found ourselves looking at each other in pleased surprise.

Ferdinand was the young mariner who had sailed me from St. Barts to Philipsburg in his little boat. He had shipped to Guadeloupe, however, on the square-topsailed *Javelin*, to do a little business and enjoy the girls. It was the hour set for the *Javelin's* return now, but both of us knew how little that meant. There was plenty of time for a reunion.

The Café Gréaux, into which he ushered me, I had passed on the way down, never guessing it was to be my haunt. It is not the great who make me shy, but the rowdy: coarse repartee in half a dozen languages was the specialty of this sailors' roost. But the sad-eyed proprietor, like Ferdinand, so I found, was St. Barts born; when he learned that I had visited Des Cayes, his native village, Jean seized both my hands in his: here was not so much a patron as a messenger from home.

After Ferdinand had gone, with a red wine stain across his lap for a souvenir of our parting, I continued to frequent the place. Its ornamental store of bottled goods, piled from floor to ceiling, set off my temperate habits as neatly as the city's gray monochrome did the girls' gay turbans. To rest up after one walk or another, while I swigged a glass, I'd spread my map out to plan the next, glancing up now and again through the two thick-arched doors to admire the market scenes over the way.

My map had been bought with some difficulty from a bookseller who thought it cost too much. However—and I went back to comfort her with the news—it paid for itself the first time I unfolded it at Jean's. The Swedes and Panamanians went on play-

ing dominoes, of course, but the local tars to whom chart navigation is a thing unknown gathered in an enchanted circle. To see the rocks and headlands they had steered around all their lives spaced on paper exactly to scale and in reference to one another made them cluck like hens. "So God must see Guadeloupe from on high!" one roughneck babbled.

Disputes of long standing were settled on the spot, and the point of a sailor knife traced various eventful trips: around the "Souffleur" to Moule, to Basseterre the capital, or the cluster of the Saintes—cruising among which last named isles the white fishermen wear hats shaped like parachutes, and Captain Daniel in his day (Père Labat not being with him) had kidnapped the priest to discharge his and his crew's Sunday obligation.

Or, round as a pancake, here was Marie Galante, to which island my schooner was to sail. Jean's uncle, a sort of port gazette, discussed the venture with me. The captain was not named Daniel, no, but a fine man, a very fine man; he came from St. Barts in fact. And the *Père Labat* had an auxiliary engine. With such a skipper and such a ship, it would be a voyage *de luxe*. Departure was at sunrise.

At sunrise, punctually, we sailed. The plural pronoun was full of meaning. I had come down an hour earlier to insure having a good place aboard, but in the dim light of dawn seemed to be seeing double at least.

It had been a poor night for rest. Dance music, not far away, had lulled me at first, but when the party was over the musicians were wound up too tight to stop. A bedroom "jam" ensued

across the court, which made me rouse myself to jot scraps of tunes. Thrillingly spontaneous, here was a feast of island jazz almost at my elbow.

Presently, however, the plain bread-and-butter of silence would have suited me better. If I was to get up at daybreak I wanted to be fresh. But freshness continued to be these tootler's resource, hour after hour. In fact their vigor mounted—until at last from a dense climax of trills they broke to a suddenly tired coda of freak caterwauls: the feast was done.

Silence's bread-and-butter which came after proved to be not wholly a metaphor. In his pajamas, here was the waiter laying a tray of it, with *café-au-lait*, faithfully on my bosom. Time to get up, damn it! "Many thanks," I told the pest, grimacing a smile.

But the coffee cleared my cobwebby brain, as I knew it had when I looked at the schooner a second time. Double vision, my eye! Scrutiny suggested, rather, that here was Noah's ark after the deluge was well in progress, and all Israel had begun clamoring for rides; *except* that this time the multitude was being welcomed entire, together with household effects, musical instruments, and domestic animals.

Should I go or stay? The rim of a bass horn in my ribs prodded the doubtful sailor forward: inch by inch the horn player and I, and the rest of us yet earth-bound hopefuls, edged toward the gangplank and slowly up it, snatching the switched tails of struggling calves from our disgusted mouths. From hand to hand an endless series of baskets was passed forward—of cardboard suitcases, trussed-up fowls, sacks of breadfruit. The schooner had settled almost to her scuppers already. Perhaps—and it was a comfort to imagine it—she'd sink before casting off.

"This is a pleasure-trip I'm taking," I told the man with the horn. We had found a square foot of space, each, to stand in, forward by the forecastle hatch. "Very fond of sailing!" And at that moment the sun peered through a rift in the vermilion

clouds, to gild to their summit the vast slopes of the Soufrière across the bay. The church bells clanged, the harbor waves danced, and the *Père Labat's* engine, which would take us out, competently began to hum.

Mangrove isles marked the harbor entry, here our sails were raised. When the canvas shook out its towers of radiant and whopping curves, so complex and yet so natural, it was curious to recall that the New World had been discovered before the art of tacking. From Phoenician times to King Henry VIII's, ships had either to sail with the wind or be rowed—which fact makes it easy to forgive Columbus's crews for their bellyaching, when the northeast trades day after day blew no way but away from home.

Thanks to the English discovery, we now sailed into the wind. Glorious! As well as I could, without cracking some black jaw with my head, I leaned back to quaff lungfuls of salt sea air. But my friend with the horn sent his instrument below and his friends sent theirs: they had brought saxophones with them, clarinets, guitars, and drums. In fact, here was the very band that had kept me wakeful. I was awed to learn it. And then they took off their shirts and shoes to be stowed in the forecastle by the *mousse* and rolled trousers up, as did the rest of us crowded young blades on the forward deck. It made drainage easier when a wave broke through our legs, the schooner having wallowed too deep wholly to surmount steep ones.

"I want to lie down," moaned the tired horn player, letting his weight roll back among the crush of the rest of us. But then a sheet of salt spray smote him, as it did us all; he broke out laughing and shook the water from his ears.

Good humor was the rule for an hour or two. The Pointe des Châteaux, though distant, kept the trans-oceanic sea swells in check. Amidships, to be sure, the black girls, well supplied with basins, were already vomiting in one anothers' laps, and the live-

stock vented its distress in various grunts, bleats, bellows, squeals, and ordures. But the day was fine, the seas magnificent; our sails bellied in the grand Aeolian style. The captain, packed among the elder passengers astern, seemed to tower among them and, Noah-like, to preside.

After awhile I felt less cheerful. In New York one year I had made the mistake of living at the other end of a subway ride, and had read Pepys' *Diary*, complete with correspondence, crammed daily into a space even smaller than that occupied by me now. But no trip that year had kept me clinging to a strap for five mortal hours, shooting pains in my shoulder blades and foot bones breaking. And the subway, though it left *Pepys* the filthiest row of volumes that ever disgraced a library, had not doused me with a bucket of cold brine every second minute: cleanliness on the new terms seemed to be bought too dearly. Nor had the stale sweet subway smell bothered me much, which could not be said for the gusts of cockroach and old onion that the forecastle now began to yield. One whiff more—could I stand it?

No. Nor could the jazz band. From their black and my sunburnt red we all turned green together. Way was made for us somehow to the rail, over which, first knee-deep in the scupper wash, then raised like hollow-eyed gargoyles spouting from a chapel roof, epitaph writer and tootlers joined in a common paroxysm.

There was some satisfaction, however, in being the last to succumb. Under the taut-stretched watch chains of the captain's friends astern, substantial bellies had quaked long since. The chickens were in a stupor. The pigs were in a frenzy. The women, like wax figures heaped higgledy-piggledy in a too-hot storeroom, sagged one against the other; their very cheeks seemed to melt and hang. The poor children lay as blue as corpses. With a sudden spasm of historical understanding, I thought of the voyages

of slave-ship days: it had been no unusual thing, once, to dump out a fourth part of such "cargoes," dead on the way from Africa.

Around our own heavy tub of woe, the seas that had swallowed the victims of those old frightful journeys were as innocently blue as ever. Pell-mell from hill to hill of lapis lazuli the *Père Labat* drove, gallantly and (by a squeak each time) triumphant. Noah, our captain, stood staunch and admirable; the cook and the *mousse*, his sons, went about their work as if our world were level, stationary, fragrant, dry, and spacious.

Noah's boys had grown up in St. Barts at a place called Salines, where the very land industry is evaporating sea water to make salt.* Broad-browed, with yellow locks that had often to be brushed back from their shy gray eyes, they wore tall-crowned Cha Cha hats and blue-striped Cha Cha clothes. In fact they were true St. Bartians. "*Ti Blanc*," the black passengers called one or the other indiscriminately—"Whitey,"—for a French Negro can speak so to a white boy without being, or being thought, presumptuous. But the *mousse*, aged twelve, actually was named Marcel. Like an acrobat he walked tightrope about the ship, carrying to his father the coffee that his brother made or answering calls from the bellowing black engineer and purser.

Albert the cook was two years older, a being of enviable serenity. While Marcel rolled up in a tarpaulin and held it tight, he turned his back to be drenched, with the fortitude of indifference. Amid pandemonium, pukings, and sheets of spray, this fourteen-year-old cranked his coffee grinder.

The galley he used, built against the foremast, was a not-large box with two hatch lids on top and in front two sliding panels. When the spray came down in bucketfuls, lids and panels invariably had been closed; but then promptly they were opened for a jiffy, and culinary enterprises were pursued.

*This West Indian industry once ranked very high, supplying the salt for the North Sea herring fisheries. One British colony, Turks and Caicos Islands, still depends wholly on it, shipping out over a hundred thousand dollars worth of salt per annum.

One lid and panel gave access to a fuel bin and larder. There were sacks of provisions in it, French bread, kindling, and a half pound of lard scraped on a sea-grape leaf. The other compartment held the fire and tinware. As usual in the tropics it was a charcoal fire in a coal-pot, burning with flameless faithfulness. Steam from the coffeepot or boiling lentils, or the strong scents of codfish or bully-beef hash would ooze out of the lid cracks when the box was shut. And the wonder was, that these scents began to make me hungry.

But the change was no wonder, really. Breakfast was six hours gone now, a French breakfast too, and lost before assimilated. Moreover, we had entered the lee calm of Marie Galante: lapis lazuli billows gave way to shallows of rippled turquoise. The children started to suck mangoes again, even the sickest of the black girls opened an eye.

At St. Louis, in a tumult of relief, enough passengers and livestock were sent ashore to give the rest of us space to move. Oh, luxury! to have a strip of gunwale for my own, and to ease my stiff pins to a sitting position! Jean's uncle had spoken well. It was a voyage *de luxe*. What a radiant day! What a green, green isle! —with a lunch at Grand Bourg in delicious prospect, to allay my hunger pangs and slake the thirst that was making my tongue feel like the cushion in an old plush chair.

But the physical ease of that hour's ride to Grand Bourg was matched and canceled by its mental stress. Now that the turmoil was over, the *mousse* decided to make friends. He conquered his shyness, turned his hatbrim up and, seating himself cross-legged on the deck, plied the American with questions.

Obligingly I ransacked the assortment of French odds and ends in my head, those little noises which strung together can have innumerable meanings or none whatever, depending on how you string them. Like a tired rat out of a dark cellar, I came up again and again with the biscuit of a sentence in my teeth—each time

more pleased with myself but also more exhausted. Family, profession, home, and hobbies were discussed, and the sports of a Minnesota winter. Fox-and-geese—heavens, what energy was consumed in the describing of that back-yard game!

But the *mousse* was helpful, quick, and interested, and constantly gave me the relief of other exercise, namely, following *his* remarks. Bit by bit Salines came to life in his report of it, with rose-colored ponds behind the house saltier than the sun-smitten blue bay in front: in blinding crystallinity the salt crust at last was ready to be raked. He played the tambourine, did I? And his travels had taken him as far as St. Thomas already, it was the part of "my country" that he knew. Guadeloupe, I then learned (not half Rhode Island's size) was the largest land mass yet seen by this young mariner.

Albert, scrubbing salt fish meanwhile, frowned and listened. The responsibilities of age gave him scant time for talk. Another cook aboard, however, protracted the linguistic chores. Creole French was his variety, which made Marcel's Norman seem schoolbookish indeed.

I required a valet, of course, he told me, appraising my mussed clothes with a cocksure eye. A valet who could mix rum punches or whip up an omelet would be especially handy; a bodyguard, too, was worth having in this gangster age—for instance, a black, tough, ugly son of a gun like himself. Moreover—for he now strenuously proposed his candidacy—he wanted very much to live in the North where, thanks to certain superiorities in his sexual physique, he felt that in his spare time he could add handsomely to the small pay that was all he'd require from me. With an impetuous gesture, he offered to show me what he meant.

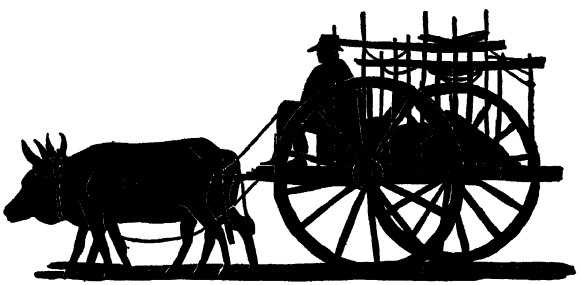
Appalled, I yet managed to inquire banteringly if he could furnish references. But certainly! The house of ill fame where at present he was in service would be delighted to get rid of him.

No kindness would be too great for *Madame* in this long wished for emergency.

"You believe in frankness," I said, giving him a tap, whereupon the rhinoceros-hide of his cheek was wrinkled by a wink. But then reviewing his past more thoughtfully he heaved a sigh. It was perfect training for a valet. His knowledge of affairs of the heart, for instance, not to mention the more technical side of love . . . and so on; after a half hour of listening to which talk and relieving it with struggling levity, I had a headache like knitting needles skewered through the brain.

Food! food! and silence, and a plank to lie on! The wish burnt my soul up like a paper doll in a furnace. "This man bores me," I wearily told the *mousse*.

"You too, sir!" he rapped back, suddenly deciding not to be my valet. Marcel rolled over in a fit of laughter, and the jazz band, with shirts now on again, broke into tired applause.



Grand Bourg is no great place. One street as blue-gray as any in Pointe-à-Pitre led toward the church, in which broad peaceful building I soon stretched out for a moment of grateful solitude. In mysterious silence and the half-darkness, the saints painted primitively on the walls seemed to confer and shuffle.

"Grand Bourg"—what a name! These West Indies had had much bad luck of the kind: the British peppered them with George Towns and Charles Towns, and the French, from whom

something more spritely might have been hoped, had been content with Big Bay and Little Hole, High Ground and Low Ground very often. Luckier were the places Columbus christened, this island for one—Marie Galante—named for the comfortable flagship of his second voyage.

Over the door to Grand Bourg's one eating place was a frequently seen island name, Schoelcher. Not pretty, it yet had meaning. After Napoleon had clamped back on the isles the slavery that *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité* had just removed forever, revolution tore it off again in Haiti: that was one story. But in the other French islands Schoelcher of Martinique in time rewon freedom by more parliamentary means.

The Restaurant Schoelcher seemed no great credit to the man. In the French colonies the cuisine is seldom a match for the mother country's, and so differs very much from British cooking which, no daisy at home, comes to its true flowering when transplanted.* Today's lunch, moreover, was to be not merely subaverage but the Worst Meal of the Year.

However, this desolating fact was not revealed at once. I felt very hopeful when I sauntered in. A decanter of rum stood on every table for a welcoming touch, and the cook was the fattest Negress not yet in a circus. Water, plain water, was what I asked for first, and she brought it, a creepy gray liquid that made my gizzard turn. Rum seemed safer, decidedly. Likewise she brought her baby to be praised; but the poor tot, to whom all white males were The Doctor, fell down with a whop three times on her screaming flight to safety.

Upon this exit, the jazz band rollickingly burst in. Could these be my recent shipmates, limp, seasick, worn to ravelings? At a rum-shop nearer the wharf they had reflated to dizzy life again, like flies swatted but not really smashed. Shirttails whirled, glasses

* The cooking at the South Camp Road Hotel, in Kingston, Jamaica—to mention one not-expensive, long-famous, and readily accessible eating place—retains the true British "plain" quality, but amid how delightful a profusion of new tropical graces!

banged, affection was effusive. And like a jovial ape swinging in on a liana, here came my black cook friend from the ship, again anxious to be hired. He was more lewd, more noisy, and more nagging than ever. My head reeled with the rum and the excitement.

As for the lunch—and I looked at my portion of it like a man peering down a cliff—it was uneatable. With greasy gusto the jazz band messed in theirs, however, and pelted one another with dry-sucked fish heads. Then, full and joyous, they snatched up their instruments and fell to tootling. It brought all Grand Bourg pushing in at the doors.

What a spectacle! What a rare chance in an unheard-of seaport! Teeth glistened, thumbs snapped, within slimsy clothing lithe bodies swayed in overmastering rhythms. And here sat I, heavier than a tombstone.

Implacably, meanwhile, the *Père Labat* was cramming herself again with goods and people. The return voyage impended—hers and mine, God be merciful! Must I, could I, rise and force myself through crowd and music, and so to a goal so hateful? On my sunken head the jazz rained ever more stupefying blows.

It was strange, thus, to observe how my fibers did their duty. With firm somnambulism I paid the bill, bade the fat cook and the pornographic cook adieu, and marched right down to cook number one, young Shem, and Ham the *mousse* and their father Noah. Like some harrowing movie rerun for my special benefit, here was the seagoing subway crush again, with its calves and hogs and chickens.

But now grief ended. I had a place to sit this time, thanks to the *mousse's* interest. The wind was with us; the coffee steam smelled good from first to last. And so—as the fact that I tell about it proves—my day's sail was not fatal after all. My one complaint is, that lacking Père Labat's power of wit I can't be sure of having made the anecdote worth the pains.

HORSEFLESH AND GOOSEFLESH

Chapter XVII.

AS GOOD LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, I WAS in American St. Croix for the Fourth of July.

Flag Day also had found me on American soil, bosom filled with uncommon fervor. But there in St. Thomas my bosom swelled daily at 8 A.M., when punctually a bugle blew in the little red fort and through the window I'd see Old Glory being raised to ripple against the blue. It was an event highly inspirational, always, to a patriot not yet out of bed.

Cousins of my mother's, the Holmes of San Juan, had come over for the ceremonies during which Old Glory was flown for the first time from that flagstaff. It was 1917; the islands had been bought from Denmark; the exchange of sovereignty was to be made. "My dear," exclaimed Cousin Margaret, telling me about it, "it was terribly sad. I cried as if I were at a wedding."

She and Cousin Fred, in fact, had been moved both by the day's deeper meaning and the danger of falling off the roof to which they had climbed for a bird's-eye view. However, other thoughts came to mind. They had been in Santiago de Cuba when General Wood relinquished the reins of government into Cuban hands, at which solemn hour a brass bell was snitched from the

general's desk for a souvenir. After mentioning this to the Bishop of Puerto Rico who was seated between them on the roof, and telling him how she still used it to call the maid, Cousin Margaret wiped away a tear with the corner of her handkerchief, thinking of the happiness of other days; the band played; and presently the Danish pennon was furled and Old Glory was run up in its stead. Bishop Collymore, it was then announced, would pronounce the benediction.

Bishop and cousins alike were thunderstruck. The call was not merely unlooked-for but acutely inconvenient. It would take his lordship ten minutes, at least, to reach the rostrum. "Stand up and say it here; we'll keep hold of your coattails," Cousin Margaret was inspired to urge. And so he did, teetering heroically to a balance. Thus with relatives of mine playing a vital part in modern history, the episcopal phrases descended as from one already halfway to the Throne of Grace.*

St. Croix, though properly no part of the Virgin Islands, was purchased by the United States at the same time as St. Thomas. It had been on the auction block before. In 1733 Denmark bought it from France, Louis XV being in need of cash to wangle the throne of Poland for his father-in-law Stanislas Leszczynski. The ceremonies of that earlier sale were curious. A candle was extinguished and relighted, plants were uprooted and replanted, stones were flung, brook water was tasted. These rustic doings, however, were seconded by no coronation pomps in Cracow. Money spent, Louis and Stanislas were left sucking their thumbs.

France had acquired the island from the Knights of Malta; its previous history had been a long dogfight between rival claimants. Nor did the Danish purchase fix the character of the place. Straw-

* Another Holmes cousin, while managing the United States Steel Corporation's mines at Daiquirí in Cuba, entertained a party of bigwigs from the New York office by setting cakes of ice in several tubs, and filling in with sugar, rum, and lime juice. The bigwigs had a delightful stay at Daiquirí, since which date the mixture in the cocktail form has been called by the little town's name in many parts of the world.

berry-red forts on the best Hans Andersen model were built, to be sure, but it was the British sugar planters who settled what language and manners were to prevail—for which reason it seemed no alien colony, really, to Alexander Hamilton, when he sailed over from British Nevis as a boy.

"A boy!" Poor Hamilton, his boyhood now came to a sudden close. At thirteen, when he should have been flying kites, he was managing a supply-house branch in Frederiksted; at fourteen, while employees of normal age failed to hide their indescribable dismay, he was put in charge of the main office in Christiansted. An infant prodigy in business is a prodigy indeed; but special oddness is given this footnote to business history by the fact that it deals also with an island that twice has had its nationality altered by commercial means.

Near Hamilton's first stand in Frederiksted is the Strand Club, where over a lime squash Judge Coulter was so kind as to draw on his rich fund of anecdote for my amusement. Sometimes another listener joined us on the gallery, a gentle Kentuckian named Wallenwood who looked as if he had strayed out of heaven by mistake. The youthfulness of the two of us, and the view of lighters unloading some freighter from the great outside world reminded the Judge of his own young days, of school in Scotland, and treating the band in Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens to a princely round of drinks. Playing the role of planter's son from the romantic Caribbees had been, we enviously perceived, a picnic. This much loved island, too, had been a happy scene for youth. We heard of shrimp hunts in streams among the endless sugar cane, of steeplechase rides over the south coast flats, and of balls at Government House, where marble busts in the style of Thorwaldsen stood on the staircase parapets.

Then there were harum-scarum sloop trips to tell of, to Santo Domingo in its wild old times. The jail at San Pedro de Macorís had struck him as extraordinary—a sort of wigwam built around a mahogany tree in whose shelter the prisoners, freed by day to

beg their food, slept chained to staples sunk in the bark. It was a description that paired well with the Holmes' account of the hospitals of old Cuba, in whose wards, when Cousin Margaret was brought down to install modern arts of nursing, she found the patients' chickens tethered to the legs of the beds.

An anecdote of an auction sale at which he had wielded the old official hammer of solid silver, led on to the grander tale of the American purchase of the islands: the Judge had been one of the Crucians called to Denmark to safeguard local interests when the terms of transfer were being drawn. For a long time the United States Navy had had its eye on St. Thomas's and St. John's famous harbors; the Imperial German Navy, the same. There had been negotiations. But now that the Panama Canal was open to traffic and submarine warfare was making everybody mad, Uncle Sam signified his readiness to snap the rubber band off his wallet.

After the price had been agreed upon—twenty five millions for Denmark's West Indies entire—Egan, the American minister, confided to the Judge that there had been forty to spend if necessary. It was news to fret a Dane. However, since willy-nilly he was to be an American himself now, rejoicing was perhaps in order. His new fatherland's public debt would be so much the less. "It was a handsome price, at any rate," the Judge finished, "and a great game to watch . . . the United States of America bidding against the German Empire!"

"Oh yes," said Wallenwood in his gentle voice. But then he fell to discussing, instead, the Independence Day races to be run at Mannings' Bay.

The Judge was the Turf Club's timekeeper; he turned readily enough from memories of international jockeying to the local event. But Wallenwood's air of dreamy prescience nettled him—naming the winners in advance, as if being born a Kentuckian were all it took to make a connoisseur of horseflesh. "And the Puerto Rican mare?" he inquired with mild asperity.

Hereupon Wallenwood looked more angel-like than ever. He

had mined for gold in Puerto Rico, and while at it had learned all he needed to know about *that* island's horses. Then with the lightness of interest characteristic of the fellow except when he talked of prospecting, his passion, he changed the subject again and wondered why it was that bullfighting had died out in the Spanish islands.

This the Judge could explain. "Protestant right thinking, enforced by the Marines," he sighed; for the various American military occupations had done the trick. Horse racing had supplanted bullfighting. And in Havana the *pelota* brought from the Basque provinces had been aggrandized into *jai alai*—no longer a Spanish game but a Cuban spectacle. Sipping our lime squashes peacefully, we recalled the bettors rising from their seats in waves of joy or terrified anxiety, while the players, no less demonstrative, flung themselves flat at a failure to return the ball or capered into the air after a clever throw.

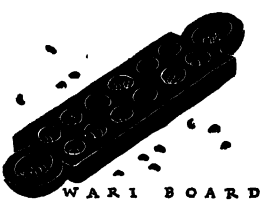
But the prime example of the gambling fever left by eighteenth century Europe as its legacy to the isles, we agreed, was cockfighting. Especially in Haiti: recollection of the rickety arena at Cap Haïtien, the thatched Kenskoff shelter, rose to mind; either one was the core of the sporting life of its community. Hats flung on the ground in outrage, eyeballs protruding, such were the signs of impending battle—whereupon the cocks, plucked half-naked already, lost still more feathers to settle whose money was whose in the gabbling throng.

Cricket the Judge grieved to state had vanished from St. Croix. No longer was the cry of "Well fielded, sir!" to be heard while the ladies vehemently waved their handkerchiefs. Nor did he find baseball a very engrossing substitute. It was a comfort that the still-British islands still were true to the prince of games. And in St. Kitts sure enough, not long after, I was to find the Leeward Islands championship matches in full swing, with the streets full of dapper colored-boy cricketers in blazers after tea, and the rest of the world unable to eat, almost, for excitement.

But if St. Croix had not taken baseball to its heart as yet, Santo Domingo had. "Strike one!" was the blast that had startled me most, blaring from the republic's radios; it was blared in English, too, though what came after was Spanish with a vengeance. In Santiago de los Caballeros I had tried to see a game, but my early arrival was an hour too late. With a thousand or two of others thus, on roof, fences, or in *roble* trees, I saw what I could from the terrain outside. Along the foul lines horsemen-spectators were ranged like troops of cavalry. It looked very fine. And there were horsemen outside with us, kneeling on their saddles for extra height or leaping up wildly at tight spots in the play, as if skittish flesh and blood weren't what they were mounted on.

"But Africa," Wallenwood thought to ask, "what fun has it sent over with all these niggers? Just mischief with the women-folks, I reckon."

This made me huffy. That very day, at the fort, I had found the off-duty policemen playing cat's cradle as if they were their West African cousins still playing string games. Nor had I ever seen such top throwing as Tortola's, done by blacks whose ancestors had come from the backwoods where the gyroscope was a native toy. As for *wari*—and here my voice grew really loud—*wari*, the Dark Continent's own game, played on a board hollowed out like a cash till, I had seen the Barbados unemployed busy at it by the hour; in St. Lucia it was a pastime commoner than cribbage is in Minnesota. And what of dancing? and music?



WARI BOARD

The Judge, I suspect, found my discoveries less impressive than comical; as for Wallenwood, he was already thinking of some-

thing else. But when I went on to say that on an island of my own, if ever I was to boss one, the non-scorekeeping games were to be the ones encouraged, a more alert look dawned in his eye, and he proposed for the two of us on the morrow that mildest of all sports, going for a walk. Sure enough, with sandwiches in our pockets, kindly made by Mrs. Coulter, we footed it all the way to Ham Bluff lighthouse, bathing wherever the coves looked tempting and pilfering fruit when opportunity offered, as it often did.

At one place the marauders were shamed by being invited in to taste "round" mangoes, a choicer kind.

"Welcome to Little La Grange," someone had written in practice flourishes on a blackboard in the room at the front corner of the house: it was a reproach so kindly that it freed us of embarrassment. But the old room was a schoolroom no longer; the children all were grown: saddles and bridles were stored where they had spelled out their Hans Andersen stories. Behind it was the laundry, with shallow tubs and linen bleaching by the door. The spacious dining room ran through the house from front to back; it was suffused with a cool green light like an aquarium's, with the carved table and chairs at its center taking the place of the fishes' castle.

As for the garden beside that clean Danish house, it was a beauty. There were borders of violets, stairs to a hillside coconut grove, and an old sugar cauldron brimful of waterlilies, with guppies in the water to thwart mosquitoes' breeding.

The master of Little La Grange, who had called us in, bade us make ourselves at home; the mistress, in a pink frock, and with hair piled high under the blond braids that kept its loops in place, strolled the paths to point out horticultural darlings. And under a Caracas plum tree daughter Anna arranged a table with knives, bowl of fruit, and green-sprigged plates: her way of doing it, in which household competence was mingled with urbane grace,

caused the two guests to exclaim in admiration after we had taken our leave. "The North transplanted to the tropics certainly can be fine!" cried Wallenwood, enthusiastic for once.

The lighthouse keeper's household at Ham Bluff was another study in transplanting. The keeper himself was a friend of mine; that is, we had sailed over from St. Thomas on the same ship—a one-armed Puerto Rican very vigorous and jolly, who had told me to stop in for rice-and-beans if ever I came out his way.

By ill luck he was not about to remember this when Wallenwood and I, sandwiches gone, tramped around to the wind-lashed precipitous north coast. His wife and children were at home, however, but could speak no English. It seemed odd, on an English-speaking American island, to find a civil servant's family in such a pickle.

Actually there was small cause for surprise. As the Danish purchase of St. Croix led to its domination by British planters, the American purchase is leading to its domination by Puerto Ricans. With a crowded island so near an uncrowded one and both under the same kind flag, there is no hindrance to emigration: over the sloops hustle, with hookworm and malaria aboard for gifts to the Promised Land, as well as the virtues of fortitude in the face of difficulty and gratitude in the face of opportunity that a life "four in one shoe" breeds in its children.

Thanks to the Puerto Rican chapter in his career, Wallenwood was better able than I to be chatty with the lighthouse keeper's lady. While the children fetched water for us from the sweating jug, he entertained her with an account of his reopening of the old gold mines at San Germán. It had been a fizzle as usual. He was always picking away at Mother Earth, hoping she would make him rich; it was both his vice and his profession.

At present he was broke. That was the hell of it, as he remarked in his customarily mild tone. While we swam and sucked guineps on the long walk home, he discussed his problem. A very small

loan would solve it, he declared, to be paid back very promptly. The molybdenum of Virgin Gorda, his latest try, had proved disappointing; now he was headed toward something sure: the gold fields of French Guiana. When mining grew wearisome there, he could prospect for diamonds. With which proposal he darted a quick and guileless look at me out of the corner of his eye.

"Let's ask for another drink, here," I countered, perceiving why this day's outing had been proposed; we were just passing a tumble-down plantation house.

Into the old slave quarters by the gates the Puerto Rican immigrants had swarmed; their rent money, as we could but guess, was the estate's sole revenue. Everything was out of repair. The terraces were a wilderness of weeds and broken bottles, the slats in the window shutters hung askew.

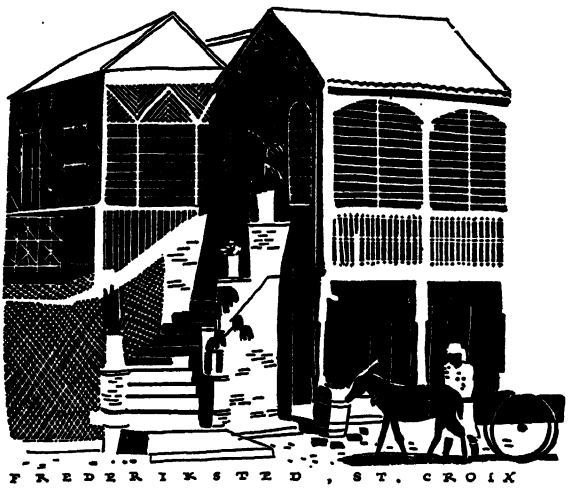
Our knock was answered by a young mulatto girl. Soiled pajamas drooped about her slim body, as if she had not quite decided to get up yet, at four in the afternoon. "This is Butler's Bay?" I asked, to be sociable, after swigging a glass of lukewarm water. But it wasn't. Butler's Bay was another ruined property, behind us now. "That's where you stole the fruit," our benefactress added, a smile of sly malice crinkling her eyelids.

Down the terrace steps we went. The mammee in my hand had indeed come from that very place. And so, with studied dignity, on past the courtyard's yapping curs, and through the gates where the Puerto Ricans, encamped, were waiting for the old management to rot to its extinction. "Looks like an early inheritance," said Wallenwood with a shiver.

He was pink and he was pretty but a deathworm haunted his conversation. St. Croix, for all its wide sugar lands, rolling pastures, magnificent old mahoganies, and sunshine, was worse than a dungeon to the fellow. In a word, it was void of minerals. But how could he get away?

I found myself fishing out a ten dollar bill by and by. It was no

small sum for a tombstone man to part with, but to Wallenwood it obviously meant more than it did to me. In fact it made him radiant. Of course he could not make Guiana with this, but at least he could move one island nearer to the goal. And on his next stop on the road to El Dorado, his luck, since it could grow no worse, very likely might grow better.



FREDERIKSTED, ST. CROIX

Next day was the Fourth of July. It also was a Sunday.

Religious scruples prevented the day's being celebrated much. There were few flags, no firecrackers, no parade. And since Americanism in St. Croix is both recent and involuntary, a little carelessness in the regard with which the islanders accept the blessing can be expected, I suppose. The Frederiksted Puerto Ricans, Latin Catholics to whom Sunday would have been a natural day for noise, also were models of restraint. Their own island had been taken by the United States as indemnity at the close of the Spanish-American War, which gave Independence Day there an ironical flavor from the start.

The very sermon in church, where Wallenwood and I sat with the Coulters, threatened to burn with a patriotism not quite whole-

hearted. St. Croix's Anglican priesthood is as British still as it was in the Danish times; our sermon was preached by an Englishman. But Mr. Levo accepted the challenge with a rush. The toe of his boot was planted in the seats of the pants of the chief current dictators, one by one, in which order down they fell headlong from their pedestals. It was hard to remember not to applaud. "From every mountainside let freedom ring!" we then sang, fervor jacked up by this British force.

All the same, it was only Sunday. Nor was the legal holiday that followed much more of a proper Fourth. Overwhelmingly it was Race Day.

On our trip out to Mannings' Bay Racecourse, Wallenwood and I had our livers well jolted. We rode on a plank in the back of a truck, crushed in with an uproarious load of Negroes—rather a lark for me, but Wallenwood's Kentucky blood pined for society less humiliating. At the gate, too, he gave me a speaking look; tickets to the Turf Club's enclosure cost a dollar and a half. But I had not come out to devote my day to profitless decorum; general admission was what I wanted, and when he saw there was no expectation of anything grander, with a good grace he joined me and the herd.

One race already had been run. Betting was in full swing. There were no cramping pari-mutuel frills: people with cash to wager went about waving it in the air and bellowing. It made a big good-humored bedlam—in which; since I was sober and amiable and a white landmark easily found, I soon was being called on to hold stakes. My pockets bulged with other people's money.

Wallenwood was among the first of these clients. He won on White Shadow, and then on another horse whose name I have forgotten. Shyly smiling, he remarked that he was putting my ten dollar gift to work. Kentucky astuteness was rebuffed in the next race, however; he lost on Ay Ay,* and across his face a frown

* This, by the way, was the island's Carib name.

fleetingly hovered. But his next guess, and he took triumph calmly, was good again.

Meanwhile, lunch time had come around. Though the music pumped out by an orchestra from St. Thomas did not flag for an instant, the tumult of betting died away. White napkins were unknotted from around baskets, platters were passed; nests of enamelware pans were unlocked, and each pan was seen to contain something good. Cheeks began to shine with chicken grease.

We had not thought to bring lunch with us, but there was plenty to buy—Danish beer and Danish ham, and roast pig, brown and toothsome. Two-wheeled Crucian carts, shafts in air, were heaped with mangoes, peanut brittle, and knob-ended crusty rolls; in each tipped-up cart a salesgirl lolled, or from it leaned out long-necked to hoot her prices. Under larger wagons, for the shade, husbands cranked ice-cream freezers, while their wives, hats clapped atop their turbans, strode about selling cones.* No one needed to go hungry and no one did. It was Race Day, everybody had come with money. Even the smaller tots, dimes in fists, by midmorning had begun to shrill their odds among the bettors.

The pork and the beer and the glorious sunshine quite warmed the caution out of me. Why not risk a dollar on Play Boy, a horse owned in St. Thomas by a man I knew? Joe Petersen the owner was a Viking from the old regime; his stately size, walrus moustache, and deafness, made his saloon the most respectable in Charlotte Amalie. Reliability was what he breathed; no doubt any horse of his must do the same. The trouble with this race was, however, that Joe's horse never got into motion. The groom somehow neglected to let go; thus after one lunge and finding himself held, Play Boy backed up.

Pandemonium! Had he officially run or not? In the Turf Club's

* To a gallant Northerner, these husbands would seem to be somewhat henpecked. But among the island Negroes generally, as in Africa, "men are the producers and women the distributors of goods."—I quote from Melville J. Herskovits's greatly to be valued *Life in a Haitian Valley*.

enclosure across the track, where access to the judges' stand was easy, it was soon known that he had not; but among the rest of us the question had to be decided by brute strength and lung power. The din was frightful. As for myself, I wished I had bet with someone easier to lick. I shall only say this of my adversary, that she was a liar, a robber, and a ruffian. I let the dollar go.

Wallenwood was not so self-controlled. He had omitted to wear a hat, and so was very sunburnt, and now he was fighting mad besides. As a Kentuckian, he knew Play Boy positively had not run. But the Negro with whom he had bet knew otherwise; he was from San Juan, turf procedure had been his meat since infancy. Besides, he had the louder mouth, louder by far; and his pock-marked visage, like the tin horseshoe pinned on his tie, emitted an evil gleam.

To my surprise, Wallenwood won the argument. He had appeared to be at a disadvantage, even though in the right; but no, the San Juan black gave in suddenly; and for a magnanimous gesture Wallenwood accepted his odds on Lady Barbara: their bet was increased and transferred to the ensuing race.

"She's the Puerto Rican," Wallenwood announced, after consulting his card. "I thought so. That nigger sure is patriotic, risking so much on a horse from home. Horses over there are small, I reckon you could run a carpet sweeper over most of 'em." Then with a nudge he added, "Guess I'll be able to get passage through to Guiana, now!" And the sunburn that had given his anger darkness brightened his smile to extra rosy.

Oakland, the defender, was a champion with an impressive record. He was the Virgin Islands' darling. And he was my horse too: via Wallenwood's pocket I had a ten dollar stake in his success. When he was led out my heart beat in rhythm with the crowd's own proud anxiety. But Lady Barbara likewise was a handsome creature. "She's built larger than is usual over there," said Wallenwood, looking at her dubiously.

Since here was the day's chief event, mango carts were deserted. The orchestra even ceased to play. To right and left along the fence the throng piled in a Dutch dike of alert humanity, from which, bug-eyed and openmouthed, the faces protruding turned like sunflowers to follow the career of the two swift specimens of horseflesh.

The contest between these specimens was almost too much for Wallenwood. In the press of the crowd I could feel his legs weaken; and on his arms, hanging across the fence, gooseflesh puckered the sunburn.

History seemed to swoop upon us. How could I watch so much at once?—first a look down the track, then one at the crowd whose entreaties and supplicating gestures respectively rent and thrashed the air, then a third at the on-surging bosoms of our fate's arbiters.

Suddenly beyond the pound of hoofs the thud of one breaker on a far reef was audible. But as suddenly again the crowd's paralysis broke into new tumult. The dike unpiled itself and streamed away in whirling knots of arguers and mourners, to the beer stands or private rum bottles to irrigate throats that disaster had parched.

Disaster calmed Wallenwood. "About a length and a half, wasn't it?" he estimated in his usual voice; then drew himself up to wither with a glare the San Juan Negro who had come for his money. And the glare had its effect. The man was quite humble, as he could well afford to be, judging by the small part played in his winnings by my late ten dollars.

"This teaches me a lesson," said Wallenwood, riding home at my expense. "After I have come back from Guiana, I'll buy an annuity. These quick ways of making cash grow I reckon get a man in trouble sooner than they put him on Easy Street."

"You lose on Oakland, too?" asked the woman squeezed in

beside him. "Plenty people did. But these roll-eye Portoricans, we going to hear them laugh. They coming home *rich*."

At this moment the truck stopped at Högensborg Estate to let off passengers. A dog had been killed in traffic at that point on the road, its remains were immediately to windward. The ladies' bags all opened and out of each came a handkerchief to be pressed to its owner's outraged nose. Our driver kindly pulled forward three yards. "That's better," sighed Wallenwood, and then remarked simply, "I have thirty-seven cents left now."

He spoke only once more on the remainder of the ride. Some Puerto Ricans came by; their holiday clothes were ornate in the Latin taste, and on the doors of their humming Ford, black-and-white sport shoes were cocked in showy ease. In Frederiksted there was to be a dance, toward which goal the party sped past us like a happy bee aiming for a rose.

"'Blessed are the meek,'" quoted Wallenwood cryptically; "Some day they'll move into Little La Grange, too," he added, "like that other place where they were camping by the gates."

"Or Government House," said Judge Coulter, when I mentioned this prophecy to him. "About 1950, say. And why not?"

Chapter XVIII.

MADAME DE MAINTENON'S GIRLHOOD was frost-bitten by the inability of her relatives to guess what the future was to bring this prison-born orphan. No, she was a burden, that's what she was; which start in life should have made her final ascendency at Versailles rich in inner satisfaction. Her girlhood, however, had had one chapter not without warmth. Some years of it were spent in Martinique. Island dowagers, when the news leaked out at last that she really had married the king, nodded their heads and sighed, recollecting the mutual innocence in which they had played dolls with her under the coconut trees.

Within a century Martinique was reveling in even thicker slabs of the same chewy kind of gossip. A Trois Islets girl—born, some hinted, in a sugar mill—married a squatty but clever Corsican after her Martinique-born husband had been guillotined during the Reign of Terror. The Corsican was in the army. Of course the girl was Josephine and her second husband Napoleon, and we know all about what happened. But to Martinique the story was current news; every ship from Europe brought further details. What a topic! Empress! Heaven help us! And from little Trois Islets, of all places!

Nor was this the end of it. Hortense Beauharnais, child of

Josephine's first marriage, became Queen of Holland.* Everybody remembered her or tried to: such a pretty little girl, she favored her dear mother, or some said it was the father. And then there was Josephine's cousin Aimée, at the mention of which name chairs were hitched closer, because her story, no more difficult to believe, was more tantalizing because impossible to verify.

Aimée had been born on the Atlantic side of the island; if Martinique was to pepper Europe with royalties, let all quarters be represented. She was prepared for ladyhood in a convent in France, but on her return voyage the ship and she with it were taken by Barbary pirates. It is easy to believe that Josephine's cousin was beautiful and that her Creole manners were lovely; something about her awed her captors, at any rate, for they sent her to the Sultan of Turkey as a gift. Through gates the most portentous imaginable she vanished; and beyond them, when Josephine's daughter was old enough to wed Louis Bonaparte, she had reared a son old enough to inherit the sultanate.

But who could swear to the truth of all this? The pirates kept no receipts for goods delivered; the harem was embalmed in mystery. To this day Aimée's story belongs on the list of island puzzles, with Atlantis's theoretical one-time existence, and syphilis's New World origin, and the Baconian hypothesis, most brain addling of any.†

While Aimée's influence could have been felt, for example, Turkey dispatched a permanent embassy to the French Directory; the old regime in France, for all its prestige, had been honored

* Napoleon I was both her stepfather and her brother-in-law; Napoleon III was her son.

† While I was in Nassau an elderly Boston lady chartered a plane, and loading it with pickaxes, dynamite, and flashlight powders, flew over to Andros to unearth Bacon's original manuscript of *The Tempest*, concealed there by him in a cave. But, as it proved, she had derived the latitude and longitude incorrectly from the *Tempest* cryptogram, as had happened once before, in Bermuda. What made this second fiasco especially tiresome was, that she had interviewed the Colonial Secretary, to implore him to have a man-of-war in readiness to transport her find to England.

with nothing grander than special envoys. Things *à la turque* soon were the rage in Paris; at a ball given in compliment to the new ambassador, the ladies appeared in turbans. Better, Turkey was an early power to recognize Napoleon's imperial status; cousin Aimée, from the anonymity of the harem, could at least urge that gesture for her greeting.

Later news from France was received with distaste in Constantinople as it was in most places. Napoleon's love for Josephine burnt with authentic fire; it was one of the deep sources of motion in his life. But another source was egoism: Josephine now was forty-eight—eight years older than himself—and had given him no heir; how was the world to guess the torture of uprooting his heart must undergo to insure founding a dynasty for the empire's benefit? No, the world jeeringly watched its upstart islander put away a wife born on a merely more backwoodsy island, to marry a royalty of the usual continental kind.

The Sublime Porte remained as sublimely inscrutable as ever. Mahmud, however, the young sultan, came to terms secretly with his country's inveterate foe Russia, in time to release the Russian forces stationed at the frontier for service against Napoleon on his march to Moscow. Two months later the verified news reached the emperor at Vitebsk. He was enraged. Why had this pig of a sultan done exactly what history would lead nobody to expect?

No one could say. Everybody backed out of harm's reach. But Martinique gossip, remote and romantic, had its opinion.

It is tempting to wonder if that cold Russian campaign might not have had another root of distress in the hot West Indies. The tactics of the Russian high command were gruellingly inglorious. First Tolly, then Kutusof disgusted his officers by making no showy use of them or his huge armies. In fact there never was an expulsion of the enemy less heroic or more successful than the one directed by Kutusof, who snored through staff meetings and

steered clear of marching up to be outwitted in open combat by the prime military genius of the age.

Kutusof's foxy inertia was probably original. I would not nip one laurel from his brow. But he certainly had heard something about Napoleon's sole previous imperial disaster, the expedition sent to Haiti. It was while the revolt against France, caused by the recommitment of the colonies to slavery, seethed again, that Christophe (not yet King of North Haiti) remarked to one of the expedition's generals: "If, instead of fighting, our system of resistance had consisted in flight and in well alarming the blacks, you would never have been able to overtake us: so said old Toussaint; no one believed him. We possessed arms; the pride of using them was our ruin. These new insurgents follow the system of Toussaint; if they persist in it, we shall have difficulty to reduce them."

The story is, of course, that they persisted, and won. In love with liberty, a populace of one-time slaves, of whom a majority had also been one-time freemen in Africa,* fought the last honest fight of the French Revolution. And they fought it against that Revolution's own world-conquering armies. When the French soldiers heard the Haitians sing the *Marseillaise*, it must have reminded them bewilderingly of what they once had been fighting for themselves.

Napoleon's contemporary detractors believed that it was his hope that some of these troops, too steeped in the old republican enthusiasm to fall in with his future plans, might be purged by a tropical campaign. If so, it was a hope only too well fulfilled. His expedition was lost entire. The soldiers who escaped the Haitians and the yellow fever managed to do so only by surrendering to the British, who put them in Jamaican prison camps. Ten thousand sailors, too, were lost to the navy; at Trafalgar they would

*Dessalines, the ferocious general who won the final victory, was born in the Congo.

have been a godsend. And the colony was lost besides. But who could win battles when climate was the fortress and the enemy was always rear and foremost and out of reach?

Who indeed? Not the great Napoleon, as Kutusof proved again in Russia nine years later.

Christophe, left behind in Haiti, made as sure as he could, when it came his turn to rule, that no new visit of the French should deliver him to imprisonment and death as it had Toussaint; he built a citadel on a mountaintop behind Cap Haïtien, the very symbol of distrust. More feminine, meanwhile, Martinique kept for its souvenir of the Napoleonic era the *à la turque* headdresses of Josephine's heyday and the gowns and kerchiefs fashionable when she was a girl.

Max Beerbohm has pointed out that the liveries of one era's servants repeat the style of clothing worn by high society in the era previous. Such was true certainly in the French islands. Brunyas's engravings, made in the 1770's, show the fine colonial ladies wearing the very costume that was to be the badge of the next century's house slaves: the full-skirted dress with its caught-up train and luscious glimpse of petticoat, the foulard drawn around the shoulders to be tucked in at the waist, the glittering earrings, the turban.

Turbans, it is curious to note, were not to come into fashion in Europe until the Turkish embassy inspired Paris to adopt them for formal wear; this was about at the time of Josephine's marriage to General Bonaparte. The era of her girlhood, however, was

marked in Europe by tremendous coiffures: hair was drawn up on frames perhaps half a yard high, powdered, and decked with ornaments. Such works of art were too elaborate to be rebuilt daily; the wearers slept with them *in situ.*

The colonial ladies were ready to sacrifice comfort to fashion as a rule, but in the tropics some things were out of reason. Still, one must look top-heavy or be a frump—which problem seems to have been solved by inventing the Creole turban, built very high indeed but removable. On the fronts of these creations they pinned the same jaunty hats that the ladies at Versailles were pinning on the fronts of their mounds of hair.

Except for these turbans, the mid-eighteenth century style in Creole dress was beautiful. The Martinique colored women loved it and never gave it up. Even in now-British St. Lucia and Dominica, as well as in French Guadeloupe and its dependencies, the gorgeous finery still is shaken out for fine Sunday wear. And since by application of Beerbohm's law the turban in time descended upon the heads that carried burdens, headdress proportions came back to normal. It had long been common for the slaves of both sexes to knot handkerchiefs around their hair, the Fullahs and Senegalese among them having borrowed the habit from the Arabs: the Negro women of most of the West Indies do so still. But the French colonies are true to the fashions of the eighteenth century in turbans as in dress, and Martinique, the old hotbed of queens, is truest to them of any.

At the Rivière Madame fish market in Fort-de-France I loafed to watch the mornings' style parades. The girls at the tables that flanked the door wore frocks of modern cut, I was upset to see; since the sun was hot they also wore broadbrimmed hats while at their job of braiding little onions and peppers, parsley sprigs, and other herbs into nosegays to put flavor in the town's soup kettles. But Madras handkerchiefs were tied around their waists

ready to be wound into turbans when work was done; and up the walk between them, with the fishermen who trotted by with live turtles balanced on their heads or baskets of crawfish, strode women to whom it was still natural to dress picturesquely. It was natural also for them to wear clothes well. There is little unmixed blood in the island; a fortunate wedding of racial genes has fixed the Martinique type: tall, slender, long-necked, large-eyed, with neat features, perfect skin, and regal posture.

But weekday clothing was eclipsed by Sunday's. Nowhere in the New World is more eye-satisfying raiment displayed than at High Mass in Fort-de-France, and one of my Sundays there happily coincided with the feast of St. Louis, king and patron. It was a religious event especially gala.

The choir girls wore purple turbans perched on their infant brows and looked very cute. But in the rich-painted cathedral with its torrents of organ music among the arches, and the tallest silver-gilt bouquets in a forest above the altar, what I was looking for was their young aunts and elder sisters. In a garden of gay dressmaking and millinery I took my pew.

Madame X at my right wore a *grande-robe* of white sprigged with green ivy leaves; the foulard drawn over her shoulders was flowered white on pink; her turban, knotted high, with a further knot of crinkly black hair drawn up and pinned against the back of it, was of pink and green. It was a color scheme in accordance with the laws of the fashion set down long ago by Lafcadio Hearn. And so was that used by Mademoiselle Z at my left: her *grande-robe* was of a maid-in-the-mist blue, her foulard, rose, and her turban was of rose barred with mulberry; a necklace of gold beads and earrings like bunches of small gold grapes added luster to a costume already handsome. Mademoiselle A, in front of me, wore a calendered turban of yolk-yellow plaid, that is, one folded from a *Madras* so stiffened by a painting process that its shape

was permanently fixed: here was the Creole version of the turban made fashionable in Paris, first, by the embassy ball—low-coiled, ladylike, and formal. As for the Mesdames B, C, D, E, and F, listening so devoutly to the French rhetoric from the pulpit, each one was a study.

But, seated or kneeling, these artists in dress could not show their attire to best advantage. It was afterward, while the postlude thundered and the congregation melted away into the shuttered-up Sabbath streets, that I got my most intoxicating eyeful of color and drapery, whisking about from group to group and wishing that people would disperse more slowly.

One haughty dame in voluminous gray silk richly damasked, with train caught up over her arm to reveal a no less rich petticoat of bright cerise, was too fine not to look at twice. I made a dog-trot detour and, trying not to pant, met her as if by chance in the Place Volny. The curly balcony ironwork cast shadows down the walls and across the slatted blinds; the leafy square was filled with Sunday calm. And toward me, full of grandeur, came my lady.

She looked as if she had seen me before, as indeed she had, two streets back; her calendered turban inclined a fraction of an inch when I bowed. As for her, she was a familiar figure to me, too—out of the old engravings.

Lafcadio Hearn, in Martinique in the 1880's, mourned the passing of the island costume. Fifty years later I found myself

doing the same. The poets have so drilled it into us that loveliness must perish, that Hans Andersen's rime,

Flowers fade fast,
But pigskin will last,

seems poor comfort for anybody but a tanner. By good luck, however, seemingly frail things can partake of pigskin's durability: the headgear of these women, for example, must be fresh-tied every day; what could be more liable to change? But the pigskin of habit lasts; little ways of doing things have a wonderful persistence in a people.

The Place Volny, for a parallel instance, seemed very Frenchy, and it was the little details that made it so: the door handles instead of knobs, the quoins, the ribbed roof tiles, even the flowing green script in which the milliner's sign was lettered.

Or the cathedral—and I trudged back to take another look—what was it that made it seem so harmoniously in character? It was no copy of any French church style that I knew; some disciple of the builder of the Eiffel Tower had planned it, a high-arching fabric of steel sinews, walled with glass. But its very loftiness was French, and its site, close-hemmed by business streets. Besides, there was something Gallic in the quickness of imagination with which a tropical problem had been tackled.

Certainly there was nothing British about it. Grandeur rather than coziness was the quality striven for; in my mind's eye, for a contrast, up rose the paneling, box pews, and low sheltering galleries of Antigua's long cathedral. Cane-fields might parch in un-English Antiguan drought, it would be coconut cream, not Devonshire cream, with the "sweet" at dinner, but in that homelike room—and God be praised for it, the colonials kneeling on their hassocks—things were as they should be. Moreover, in Antigua as in Devonshire, or any other right-thinking (i.e. British) place, the church was in a churchyard. Such was the law of habit.

Having made comparison thus far and reflected platitudinously that architecture was society's dress as a group as the costumes I had been admiring were the dress of it as individuals, I went on to think of the islands' Spanish churches. Like an authoritative benediction the walls of Santo Domingo cathedral closed in about me: here was New World architecture old enough to be Gothic of actual Gothic times. As the Emperor Charles V had given instructions that it should, the calm pavement led away, bay upon bay, to an apse where the altar frowned in richest silver. And into bell arches by the door the young *campaneros* swarmed, to clash out at close range their pulse-dizzying peals: it was the Hispanic way of ringing church bells, transferred unchanged from the Old World to the Indies.

The general scheme of the structure was no less Hispanic. Spain's way of building had been bred where the sun a large part of the year was an enemy: thick walls, with few but lofty openings, were the rule—which rule, at once practicable in the tropics, has seen little alteration since first introduced. From the North, on the other hand, where summer heat can best be relieved by opening a building to the breeze, has come an architecture that adapts itself to tropical temperatures by growing more and more birdcage-like.

The British, whose habits put pigskin to the blush for durability, are still puzzled to know how to make a bird cage cooler than the world around it; in Grenada, for example, the windows, greatly enlarged, have been boxed in with contraptions of slats (to keep the glare out) through which it is impossible to look. But the French islands, as half-Spanish Dutch Curaçao did very early, are turning from slats and lattices to the insulated type of building. In Haiti, even, filigree is passé. New construction is in the international style, and its large plane surfaces and blocks and curves sit very well among the hibiscuses and mangoes.

Rambling the Fort-de-France heights that afternoon for a

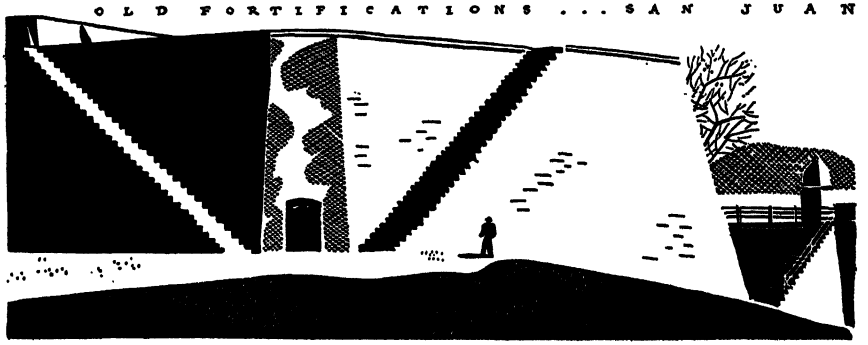
Sunday spree, I climbed high enough to look back on the slab roofs of the new Colonial Hospital. All very neat! Contemporaneous with complete simplicity, the spread-out low group of buildings took my eye. Why not use this style of my own day, myself, when building my own island house?—with a bougainvillea vine on the top slab like a big red wig? And a view like this! What a luxury! The great bay drowsed in the sun, with a battlement of mountains on its farther side, and Trois Islets where Josephine was born. On the near side were city and cathedral spire, and Fort Louis tucked on the couch of its promontory like a dowager duchess sound asleep.

Poor old lady of a fortress!—as a young lady her virtue had not been proof against British assault very often. For forts are in fact feminine institutions if you subscribe to the male's being the aggressive mechanism and the female's the defensive. Their role is to guard the valuables in their care—chastity, riches, arts, or whatnot—which enterprise it is that gives their watchfulness its womanly repose. The structure of chief majesty in the West Indies is no church nor palace, but that Amazon of a fort, Christophe's Citadel.

Liberty was what the Citadel was built to guard, but its enemies, as it happened, had been bled too white to test it with a siege. In Puerto Rico however, for an opposite kind of tale, San Juan's Morro and its sister forts could tell of assaults repulsed, fit to put any woman in a glow: their miles of ramparts, bastions, and dry moats once ready, though stormed many times, were never taken. In the maidenly art of self-defense they were the nonpareil. But elsewhere in the islands—as here in Martinique—capitulation had been more usual. The male masters the female in a natural world; there was nothing out of the way in Fort Louis's having been won now and then by a gallant foe. A gracious yielding after a seemly struggle is romance's crown.

Nobody understands this better than the British. From Mar-

tinique's great bay beyond the fort here, it was, that the French fleet sailed to its destruction by Rodney in the Battle of the Saintes. The *Ville de Paris*, de Grasse's flagship, was "washed over with gold to the water's edge"—it was a showy era, the Versailles coiffures had just passed the zenith of their fantasticality. But gilding was no match for the British admiral. By that day's victory in 1782, his empire was saved from its threatened dissolution. The calamities of George III's reign now were at an end. But will you believe it, the British, though ranking this first among naval battles in the Western Hemisphere, think more fondly of their land defeat in St. Kitts two months previous. The point is that the defense of Brimstone Hill there, was so game—for a monument to which useless fortitude the hill's fortifications pose grandly to this day, while British tourists "snap" them.



OLD FORTIFICATIONS . . . SAN JUAN

The loss of Diamond Rock, a fortress island off the south coast of Martinique, is another tale loved by the British. Defeat in this instance gave the navy's most idyllic episode just that turn of tragedy necessary to make it classic.

That war can have its idylls is troublesome to admit. I should prefer to have it stink throughout, and so excuse my inclination to write essays while other people bleed. But history does not flinch from exposing its unseamy side; for like the "remnant of

justice" that Socrates saw was what enabled the unjust to work together, it is humanity that makes possible the organizing of inhumanity, and in doing so gives war its ironic interest.

Certainly the first wars between West Indians and invading Spaniards were a beautiful subject for the fresco painter. Amid the strange blooms and masses of strange foliage of Hispaniola, at La Vega in 1495, the first battle was fought, one army ranged stark naked, the other glittering in burnished armor.*

Humor came into the wars, too, laughably as humor will. When Morgan's filibusters were put to it on Old Providence Island to keep the just-dispossessed Spaniards from returning, they loaded the cannon with the church organ pipes and "let them have it"—a bombardment which was, as we would say, a scream. Or even the French Revolution's Reign of Terror, enforced in the islands by Victor Hugues, had its facetious side. The Martinique belles could dress in cotton prints sprigged modishly with blood-red little guillotines.

Slaughter, however, is the immediate purpose of the military arts. It cost three hundred thousand lives to guarantee liberty to the slaves of Haiti—a country smaller than South Carolina. The American Revolution was a lawn fete in comparison. Nor were South America's wars of independence, though bad enough, any such frantic holocaust. Bravely lending Bolívar military aid, Haiti, between the two continents on its island, had to pay more bitterly than either for its children's heritage. But during the era that saw this agony come to somber triumph, the idyll of Diamond Rock was at its prettiest.

Diamond Rock's cannon were real guns that shot real death-dealing cannon balls; its final defense was a dismal failure. But it

* The last European war in which armored knights took part had not yet begun. The Age of Chivalry was past, however, as no doubt the Indians noticed. Firearms were in use; and though the harquebus took three minutes to load and two to fire, the fact that gunfire wounds were "treated" with boiling oil gave the new weapon special deadliness.

was an island, snug and small: Commodore Hood fell head over heels in love with it and so did his officers and men. The inner nook, of grotto-bound lawn and fig-tree thicket, was given the name "Portland Place" in a surge of admiration.

The Navy's year-long occupancy of this rare picnic spot even had its staff artist and historiographer. That the swinging of ordnance from sailing ships to emplacements six hundred feet above the billows was a hard feat to perform did not mean that it also was hard to picture. But to do justice to the delightfulness of the place was another thing: John Eckstein, flinging down his pen, pronounced it inexpressible. But then like a good historiographer he took up his pen again, and particularized; and as the roast joints and melons pass before our view, and we quaff in imagination those abundant toasts in claret punch; and then, after scanning the horizon with our mind's eye for enemy sail, see the moon illumine the sailors' tents, and hear in our mind's ear the gurgling of caves at water-line that made Eckstein's lullaby, we know what sentiments swelled his bosom. It was a boy's dream of an island, and what man would not find relish in living on such a one, if a war gave him the chance?

But the Rock, loved like a girl itself, lacked womenkind. There were jests made on the theme, no doubt, and inward wishes when the moon cast the image of fig leaves on the tent tops at night. Martinique lay just over the channel, with its queenly women; Josephine, the enemy's Empress, had been born not ten miles away. Poor Empress! coarse jests were made at her special cost; she soon was to be relegated to Malmaison, while Marie Louise of Austria reigned over Europe with the conqueror.

Napoleon won Diamond Rock, true enough. But he was not to go on conquering forever. He lost an army entire in the Haitian try, and soon, and personally, was to lead a far vaster force into Russia to be swallowed up. St. Helena had begun to loom in the distance.

Josephine, meanwhile, knew no true eclipse; she ruled imperially, though only over the greenhouses of her prison. "Hortense," "the gardener," she had named her daughter; for a solace she cultivated the hobby now herself. Gifts from well-wishers far and near streamed in, of shrubs, and flowers, and exotic creepers, till Malmaison was an island of things tropical in the French countryside. After a revolution, the Napoleonic wars, divorce, she was to die in a sort of New Martinique, her Creole charm unimpaired.

The poets' quick-fading loveliness is not illustrated by Josephine's story. Perhaps she was exceptional. Madame de Maintenon's virtues, on the other hand, were strictly leathery. Nor did they fail her in her grand old age; her success had been too well earned, every kiss of it, to decay. But earned love is not the final bliss. It has the smell of duty in it. To be loved for loveliness as Josephine was, and good islands are, is the only love that satisfies our craving. When told one day that the Sun King's carp were sickening in the royal ponds, "They miss their mud!" the great lady blurted.

It was a remark that jarred everybody's nerves—unbelievably out of character. But, who knows? despite her girlhood's indignities she would have liked to live it over again, perhaps. Perhaps in Martinique a second time, when she ran barefoot down rain-soaked paths to look up into the opening skies, it would not be with the snubbed child's determination to win all adult battles. Defeat, too, can have its victories. And oh, the release sometimes of being vanquished!

KING WILLIAM AND THE RUMBA

Chapter XIX.

AS IF THE FACTS OF HISTORY COULD be confuted by mere brute lung power,

King William was King James's son,

we bellowed,

All the royal race is run;
Wore a star upon his breast,
Point to the east and point to the west;

and so through to the final stanza, stamping like Cossacks. After which—back to King William again, and again and again, while the little gray shack was rocked on its props by our energetic circling. Whew! What exertion!

At the windows black faces grinned, shining, as our white ones shone, in the light of a lantern hung from the ceiling beam. There

was a hole in the floor, but a bit of planking had been laid over it to spare anyone's breaking a leg.

Little red wagon painted blue,
Skip to the loo, my darling,

we sang, kicking up heels. The loose board was as much of a hazard as a safeguard in these skipping games. Then came "Honey in the Dell" with its bold embracing, "In and Out the Window," "Gone Again," and a game of forfeits, after which the refreshments were served.

Miss Gracie, my partner, was radiant. The party obviously was a success; since she was one of the hostesses this was a load off her mind. Beside, she was having a whale of a good time herself, and so was I. In lemonade we drank the health of the guest of honor, a contagiously jolly blond young man; he was going off by the next mail boat to finish his education in the great outside world, that is, in Nassau. Even when Miss Gracie dropped her cake, her happiness was unmarred. She just cut another slice, while "Where's Bob?" everybody cried, and in bounded a big woolly loving dog; he ate up the fallen piece in a twinkling as well as several other kind contributions.

When pitchers were dry and cake plates empty, the shack was abandoned for a dance through the streets. Door shutters had been folded in on the sleeping Harbor Islanders; the hurricane-glass lights in King Street hallways had been extinguished. But the sky was well spangled with stars, by whose light we rollicked, exchanging partners and caroling:

You'll be the reaper
And I'll be the binder,
For I have lost my true love,
And right here to find her,

while the goats jumped their fences in alarm, and broke through the procession.

Then presently, in the shack once more, the guest of honor "raised a hymn." "God Be with You till We Meet Again" we sang, in parts, after which number I saw Miss Gracie home.

Perhaps you inhabit a region where fun of this kind makes a normal farewell to a popular young man. If so, my congratulations. It was a novelty to me, though King William, so my mother says, was a game not unknown in the Kansas of her girlhood. "Skip to my loo!" from her, in fact, in my own more recent infancy, was equivalent to the modern phrase, "Get going!" The Bahamians trace their lineage very often to loyalist families that fled Carolina after the Revolution: some of these strenuous dancing games had come to the islands by way of the mainland colonies.* But their origins were in Britain, and to find them still flourishing was a pleasure.

It also was a surprise. The white West Indians as a rule are quite up to the minute. What is being danced and sung on the continents is being danced and sung by them. Nor do the colored people shun ballroom dancing or Tin Pan Alley's sweet music. Luckily, however, this is not the whole tale, though Harbor Island's high jinks are unusual so far as my knowledge of white merrymaking goes. The Negroes, for the most part, are responsible for the dancing and music that are remarkable.

In Jamaica, for example, at a Tram Lines picnic, the legs that had seemed so nimble under me in King William were rooted in inactivity. These bouncing-breasted black girls and elastic black boys were up to tricks taught them by no Anglo-Saxon. Cold Spring gristle could not hope to qualify.

The floor proper was too crowded to permit more than an all-of-a-piece movement in the mass, but on the lawn outside revels less gelatinous were afoot. When partners were unavailable or absent

* The Bahamian addiction to hominy grits would seem to be a Carolina legacy.

on other business, people whirled and trotted by themselves; girls danced with girls, men with men, helter-skelter across the dusty grass by the sea; groups blended and dissolved like a dream of motion.

The chief sight at Rockfort Gardens that afternoon, though by no means the only one of its kind, was a rumba danced endlessly by a young buck in a curl-brimmed hat and his girl, radiant in green rayon. It was a world of their own that these two inhabited under the blue-starred lignum vitaes. Their ballet of the chase of love was older than those iron-hard trees; it had the animal freshness of the first guilt in Eden in it, as they advanced, retreated, touched, parted, revolved rapturously about each other, progressing from figure to figure in continuous rhythm, she all curves, he playful but intent. I see the fellow run toward her now, whirling one arm as if to wind tighter and tighter the springs of her desire, while she, hips quivering, stiffens in delicious dread.

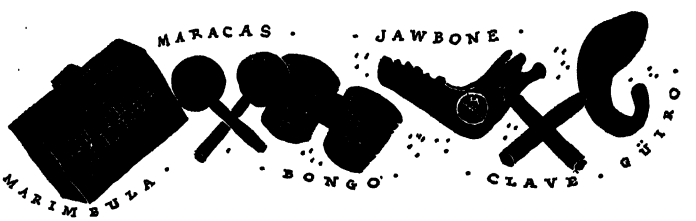
So also one fine night in Barbados when I heard choral music while prowling a country road, it would have been astonishing to find white people making it. Nor was I astonished. It was being made by eight Negroes behind the hedge of Barbados pride, seated like madrigal singers around a table. A chant by Purcell from the Anglican liturgy was what they had hit upon for their theme; now, singing and resinging it, they added permanently those harmonic or vocal effects that to their ears enriched its beauty.

Purcell might have been discomfited by the anthem so evolved, as King William certainly would have been, to hear himself immortalized as the son of his fathead father-in-law James II.* Or the proud dancers of old Africa might have found my Tram Lines rumba a slipshod show. Popular use, because it preserves a thing alive rather than like a fly in amber, does not bar it from new mutations.

* William III is the hero of our song. William IV, however, actually lived in the islands; as Duke of Clarence and a naval man, he was stationed for some time in Antigua, where his charming residence still stands.

Indeed, in a country of mixed immigrants, if an art is to live it must take its nourishment in part from alien sources. Dancing games have survived in the Bahamian out-islands, perhaps, because the Negroes of those balanced communities have kept the whites from forgetting their bounce. Certainly the noise made on the Harbor Island foreshore by the white children playing with the black was freer in snatches of song and rhythmic whoop-de-do than is usual among British tots—especially in the blacker colonies where worry about the color line exerts its blighting astringency. As for Merry England itself these days, or even the merrier England of the first quarter of the century, I tell no news when I say that its citizens are prone to vocal and muscular restraint. No, the Bahamian doings were like those of an older time in Britain—like the milkmaids' May pail garlanding that Pepys described, or the game of "I love my love with an A" that he watched King James play on the floor with the duchess and some other ladies when His Majesty was still Duke of York.

The Barbados anthem builders, meanwhile, at their civilized frolic, had not merely based their Negro music on a white master's theme, but used European harmonic laws in its development. For by such hospitable interchange the West Indian arts achieve their character.



Unencouraged in racial pride, out of touch for generations with the culture of Africa, the Negroes naturally are the more hospitable in this interchange. They may put on a show of arrogance, but the fact that they are "inferiors" makes them covet the

proud culture of the whites. Music thus is Spanish in the Spanish islands, French in the French, British in the British. And behind these national distinctions are those international ones bred by the Church; for it would seem no chance thing, even in our mainland world, that the Negro spirituals were developed in a Protestant countryside, whereas jazz, with its emphasis on instrumentation, spread from the Lower Mississippi Valley—that is, from once French Louisiana whose focus is still Catholic New Orleans.

In the Protestant islands where the slaves were converted by the Moravians and the British dissenting sects, hymns sung in parts have been the fare Sunday after Sunday, gospel meeting after gospel meeting. At Calabash Bay I heard them in their primitive simplicity: unaccompanied, the voices divided into melody and bass counterpoint. The night music at Blue Hole, of larger harmonies and more spirited rhythm, with the fisherman drawing his counter-melody through it, was an extension of the polyphonic form—as was the anthem building that I heard in Barbados.

In the Catholic islands, on the other hand, the minimum of church music, Sunday after Sunday, wedding after wedding, funeral after funeral, has been the priest's chant at the altar, flowing its purely melodic way. And the choir's part in the Mass, progressively more polyphonic since the jolts of the Reformation, has never become wholly so; at any rate the innovation had small place in the islands until after plain-song had been rooted there a full century.

How can these repetitions fail to impress lifetime listeners? For some cause, certainly, in the Catholic islands melody is king. If parts are sung they generally duplicate the air, note for note, on the third or sixth tone below it. Or the high octaves played by the flute so heart-piercingly in Cuban *charanga* music are still more slavish. In a word, in this homophonic realm the voices proceed side by side like nuns out for a stroll; whereas in Protestant

polyphony they move with some independence, like a Bible class picnic at a game of tag.

But melody hankers for accompaniment. In the Catholic islands, so I have noted, guitar or accordion for chord harmonies, percussion instruments for rhythm, play an integral part in any song fest. And such being the case, it is in these same islands that instrumental music thrives in its own right, with its own special melodists. It was in French-Catholic Pointe-à-Pitre that the jazz band kept me awake developing tonal effects out of its native wit; and two boys on two flutes one rainy night played duets under a high-wheeled cart.

Or I think of my first short night ashore in the tropics, now long ago, when like a white moth in my new white clothes I hovered after a small-boy band that was picking up pennies in Havana. Here was something unmistakably Caribbean—boleros sung in thirds in sad brassy tones to the accompaniment of guitar, maracas, claves, güiro, marimbula, and bongó—instruments for the most part nameless for me then. Except for the guitar all were non-European: the swishing gourd-rattle maracas; the tapping ebony-stick claves; the loud-rasping gourd güiro; the deep-toned marimbula on which its player sat, reaching between his legs to twang the metal prongs; the tough double drum of the bongó, tuned over a spirit lamp.

That black brat of a bongó player was a very demon. Ferocious in vigor, prodigious in technical resource, he was fired by the genius I was to find animating island music on so many later occasions, staid as well as madcap. For beyond the unities that national example and the Church have given it, is the Negro's unifying vitality.

I wish I could report the survival of African arts of the more solid kind—bronze founding like Benin's, carving in wood, architecture as full of geometric fancy as some Hausa palace's. Who knows, it might be so if the blacks had migrated in liberty. But

as things were, and even to the kindlier of their masters, African sculpture (for one instance) was as heathenly evil to be caught busy at as poisoning a well. To survive transplanting to the slave world, in fact, an art had to be of the inward sort, capable of being popped out for exercise when safe, then popped back into the mind again when not.

Thus, balladry, mimicry, and proverb coining could be practiced almost under the overseer's nose. Dancing and music were even patronized by the whites: command performances on the Great House lawn never failed to amuse guests come over from jaded Europe. The more earthy and deep-seated elements of these arts, however, the slaves soon learned to keep for less public times.

Persecution, by forcing Voodoo underground, saved it from the blight of ridicule; in the Haitians' superb drum techniques and ritual chants and dances, the islands' most nearly pure example of the African arts has been preserved. But a mating of European materials with African means is what is common—as in the Havana boys' music, with its African tympany and brass-voiced Spanish tunes.

Or the famed calypsos of Port-of-Spain are children of even more diverse parentage. Trinidad, seized by the British in one of the odd flukes of the French Revolution, and flooded by them with East Indian labor, had hitherto been a Spanish colony, worked by Negroes under French management. All elements remain: the language of these rowdy ballads tends often toward the polyglot, though an English of drolly misplaced stresses is the base. And since the island's Franco-Spanish phase stamped it with Catholicism, its music is homophonic.* Newsy and personal, the calypsos show scant kinship with choral music's group utterance.

* The melodic characteristic, if I may stick my neck out far enough to say so, is an emphasis on the use of third intervals—which since I note it also in the Haitian hill music and in the incantation Elfrida taught me in Carriacou, I surmise to be a Negro contribution. Támbu bámbu ("drum bamboo") provides the true native accompaniment—a nondescript orchestra, in which bottles are a common instrument.

Cuba is preëminent in supplying the Spanish-speaking West Indies with their popular music; Trinidad plays a like role for most of the others—that is, it shares the responsibility with Tin Pan Alley. In fact I learned more of the calypsos in Jamaica or St. Lucia than in Trinidad itself, and more still in Grenada. But St. Vincent, an island not yet visited in these essays, taught me more than any, as well as a great deal else about what the popular arts can be on an island (and will be, God grant, on mine). And so with a glad adieu to theory I shall set about telling what I saw and heard there.

At sunset the *Lady Hawkins* dropped anchor while the bay's hillside fields of arrowroot warmed to green-gold and Kingstown's long strand arcades blushed a modest pink. Captain Bligh of *Bounty* fame had brought his cargo of breadfruit seedlings to this haven at last, after a second and unmutinous voyage. I was glad to disembark myself. And in no time I knew I had done so lucky foot first.

For one thing I liked the hotel, the Pelican. When I came in late, as constantly happened, and stole down the tunnel that led to the court, it was delicious to find the court staircase gleaming

like salt in the moonlight, and to see the black blot of my shadow go skipping up.

However, and though I accompanied the proprietress to church, and applauded her daughters' fluent performance of *Melody in F* and other classics, these people thought not quite happily of me. For aristocratic colored folk, my interest in the island's own vulgar music bred altogether too much of it about the premises. One glance from my bedroom window would set the urchins to tap dancing, while some such unpardonable ditty as "Wash Your Hands and Pick Your Fingernails" might taint the air.

The beginnings of this education had been in a barbershop where, hearing music, I turned in for a shave.

Around walls well pasted with pictures of Joe Louis and the royal family lounged the singers. They knew Irving Berlin by heart and of course the Trinidad calypsos. Robert Charles, one idler among them, composed; strumming away at his four-stringed cuatro, and revealing the absence of an important front tooth, he favored us with

Meat is sweet and rice is nice,
But rum-drinking like honey, sugar, and spice,

while the barber snipped and swayed in rhythm.

One client several times cast off the cloth that swathed him to illustrate on a guitar some refinement in chord progression. Or when an especially dear number was embarked upon, the sewing machine next door would cease to whirr, and around the tailor would hop, tape-measure flying, to add his vibrant baritone.

This led away into various other sessions. The moon was at the full that week, and by the light of it in Arno's Vale or on Sion Hill I wrote out melodies and stanzas.

Emily, leave me alone,
I don't want no more wife in me home,

was a calypso that Robert Charles thought good;

No more depression I decide to bear,
My last khaki pants I'm wearing got tear;
So leave me alone, I don't want no wife,
Girl, I going to live the bachelor life.

Then, with a deeper pathos:

Your family only worrying me—
They want me to join in matrimony!
Before I should take such a tiger track,
Em'ly, I leave you, please don't come back!

It was a romanza of the realistic West Indian kind, as was also,

I was accuse for brutality
Cause I got pep and vitality,

or that cautionary favorite which, having pointed out that plain girls make the most loving and hard-working wives, ends,

Therefore, from a logical point of view,
Always marry an uglier woman than you.

Most of these songs and others native to St. Vincent were taught me by a trio of enthusiasts, Farino, Nugget, and Rodney, named for the admiral.

Farino was a quarrelsome, jealous, long-boned rascal but full of music. To the tune of what he sang, he would reach inside the tatters of his shirt to make rich sucking noises in the hollow of his arm. Nugget was small and graceful. Dancing and singing were inseparable in the fellow: when he lifted his chin to carol in loud true tones he "dingolayed" automatically, that is, wove his body in rhythm. As for the admiral's namesake, he was a gentle young man but played the mouth organ like a Lucifer.

As still as frost the moon glared in the serene vault of the sky; masses of mango foliage loomed overhead, no less silent; cool airs flowed down the hillside toward the sea—into which realm, shadows reeling before us on the pavement, capered our tombstone man, of all people! with this troop of imps. And on the

moon-struck milestones I would sit, and with the imps' help copy out what they had taught me: the *Mussolini* or *Joe Louis* calypsos, say, those blasts of racial pride, or the islands' version of Edward VIII's abdication:

It was love, and love alone,
That cause King Edward to leave the throne.

That these frolics were planned for my edification did not mar them, thank heaven, any more than the "Abdication" calypso was marred by being in an untypically minor key.* But events not designed for the visitor are what I prefer—a gospel meeting, say, such as I chanced upon, one night in Kingstown market square.

If ever I saw a scene out of Utopia, or perhaps I am thinking now of my own more easygoing island, there it was. Not that the place was any less pleasant by day, with its heaps of bananas and purple "pears," and curtsying huckster women who, because I was polite, hollered "Praise God!" when assured my health was good. And the adjoining fish market had its golden hours when the boats same gliding in and the small boys, naked and frolicsome, skited through the bright-turbaned crowd for dives from the wharf. But night brought a homelier kind of beauty. In the dark the trees seemed to spread their broad boughs twice as far, and the Georgian brick architecture, rising simple and clean above the clean paved spaces, shone rosy against the sky.

The evangelist was a blind graybeard in a smock, like some prophet come down from an Ethiopian hill. The women with him, however, were spry enough. Their charge was to bawl each hymn stanza's opening line, to jog the memory of the rest of

* Its tune also is untypically short. But a comparison of the scales used generally in the Negro melodies of our British-influenced mainland and the British islands is highly curious. In both the minor is rare. The mainland's familiar pentatonic (black key) scale (as in "Swing Low Sweet Chariot"), and the diminished seventh to which its intervals seem naturally to lead, for some reason are unknown in the islands, except the Bahamas, whose Negroes came from the mainland with their loyalist masters.

us. As for the throng, it was made up of ordinary mortals, some of whom, between hymns at least, were sinners. There were lapses from innocence of speech and behavior to be observed, and the riffraff urchins played tag among our legs without heed either for salvation or earthly safety. But perhaps all the more so for this reason, while singing my part and hearing the music expand in brass-band majesty about me, the wonderful fact that fun like this was common among these poor black people made me admire them very deeply.

Or in Paul's Lot on another night when I happened on an impromptu dance, since I was kindly known I could sit on the curb and clap hands for it without being too impertinent.

Girls were making the music for this party, in high breathy tones. But though soft, their singing had power to put the neighborhood's young fry all in motion. Some danced grotesques; others satires on their elders; and others again, still too tiny to wear clothing below rib level, jigged like veterans. Now and again the group would come down in formation from the outer shadows, bent double and pumping arms; or there would be a rumba; or one of the young lady singers would dart out to dingolay and shake herself like jelly.

CUATRO

There was to be a "pay" dance beyond police bounds in the hills one night later; and when two stevedores told me of the event and invited me to come with them to it, they leered significantly.

Rodney, Nugget, and Farino upon hearing the news also exchanged glances rich in meaning. "You take the tiger track, walking at night with worthless characters like them!" Farino moaned,

spreading his big hands in anxiety. And indeed the two new companions, panting rum fumes, did loom very large on either side of me as we mounted the long ravine. I felt my marrow freeze. Nor was it reassuring, when we passed through a breadfruit grove, to see the three more familiar friends detach themselves from the shadow to follow behind, as they had volunteered to do, for a secret bodyguard.

By and by, here was the dance hall with music oozing from it. Nor was I allowed to hesitate on the sill. A black hand caught mine and drew me instantly to the bar.

The doorman, it proved, was the boatman who had fetched me from the *Lady Hawkins*. Proud friendliness beamed from his face, which was brightened further by the gin-and-beer mixture he grandly ordered. As for the bouncer, a dirty-clothed very black Negro named Jim, slouching about with a thick cudgel hanging from his waist, he was brother to one of my troop of Kingstown guides. "You the man give George those pants he need so bad?" he cried, opening his eyes, and swept me off to meet the girls and orchestra.

The Pelican's proprietress was right. My circle in Kingstown lacked social tone. These free-mannered girls were by no means strangers, Florinda, Hyacinth, Lucille, Aurora. As for the orchestra, squarely in the middle of it sat Robert Charles, giving me the high-sign. My stevedores were a mite miffed by all this welcome. They had expected—and so had I—that their tourist "catch" would be putty in their hands, rather than a man come home to the bosom of the family.

It was *bal* that was being danced, in fine loose-jointed style. And indeed the music had force in it to put a hitching post in motion. Along the wall on a bench was a battery of guitar players, leaning all at one angle, with Robert's cuatro their key instrument—before which dark frieze strode the clarinetist, hat tipped over eyes. If the throb of strings was the power that moved our

entrails, it was his tricks that dazzled the ear: what he could do with a rowdy tune like "Oi-oi-oi, Don't Touch Me Down There" against the velvet of their thrumming, was—and I would stop to gape at it—a marvel.

This virtuoso and his brethren I treated to a round of drinks; but the event, unlike the many others of the night's exchanges, was marred by an act of incivility. A brash newcomer, pushing in, made bold to help himself to the bottle.

Everyone was appalled. He was especially, when Jim's cudgel whined in a sudden arc. Poor newcomer! he was the first goer too; with head well sunk in collarbone he shot out the door—at which awful moment I became conscious of six eyes staring at me through a slit in the wall, like glass eyes in an oculist's display case. It was my bodyguard.

"Come on in, boys, I'm safe," I told them; and indeed it was an unrobbed, unharmed, and very cheerful tombstone man who looked out into next morning's radiant world. Fitting bottle caps on their toes, the street urchins as usual fell to dancing. What an island! What a day! It was impossible not to do something showy. Kings might be a rarity in Kingstown since William IV sailed home from the colonies, but in such an atmosphere even I could play the prince. Ergo, I hired the biggest boat on the waterfront and took all the singers to Flat Rock for a swim.

Having put down the stone he kept in the back of his fist for meddlesome policemen, my guide George plied an oar; Farino strained at another, and Willy the boatman set the stroke. When we rowed past his father's house, infant Cyril, in my lap, opened and shut his little hand, whereupon up flew the windows and the family leaned out to wave and holler. And at the Rock the lake-bred Minnesotan, roused to a pitch of heroism quite out of character, dived into and swam down through the multicolored brine till my head was ready to split—so rising at last at a distance that

was acclaimed a prodigy. Farino, gasping like a dying man, struggled only half as far.

After this triumph how could I forbear treating the crowd to a round of snowballs? The Portuguese into whose shop we crammed, was all but prostrated shaving ice for so many red-syrup drinks. The din was deafening. But when all had been served and glasses loudly were sucked dry, Farino, eyes closed, lifted his hands. And out from inside that jailbird rose a song: everybody knew it, everybody sang it; the noise resolved itself to order like a school of fish swimming suddenly all one way. Hands clapped, feet tapped, bodies dingolayed. And so to "Tie Me Donkey" and the "Monkey Song," the smaller boys' favorites; after which everybody tore his cap off and sang "God Save the King," with three cheers for George VI and, will you believe it, three for me.

"Well, good-by," I told them afterwards, for my ship was to sail that evening. "And may you all live long, useful, and happy lives"—upon hearing which words infant Cyril put his fist to his eye, his mouth pulled dolefully out of shape, and he hid behind a tree. He'd brought a puppy for a keepsake for me, poor little shaver, with a speech about how when grown it would jump up lovingly on me and protect me; when I packed I was glad in a way that I'd given it back; the suitcases were bother enough, bulging with Madras handkerchiefs and songs. But down the face above my necktie, when, while thinking about all these things, I tied the tie in readiness to go, a tear came trickling.

Ridiculous! What a mug! Thank heaven the porter had not come up yet, to see me!

Chapter XX.

IF A WILLINGNESS TO BE PLEASED IS happiness's first requisite, and I think it is, the first requisite of festivity is a willingness to be gay. The thought has occurred to me that on a well-run island the citizens should be assigned colors to wear throughout their lives, some green, some scarlet, some blue, and so on, to insure that all crowds be picturesque.—A "gorgeous idea," but I turn it over to rulers more dictatorial than myself. For me it would spoil everything on a festal day to have to jail some rebel soberly clothed: the raiment of more dutiful citizens immediately would seem sheepish.

No, willingness is essential; for the willingness to be gay breeds a readiness for sport, and readiness breeds spontaneity; and spontaneity in its turn makes faces shine and invents new doings, and best of all brings life, joy, and meaning to the customs bequeathed to us by other times.

Whether our present method of legislating the limits of working hours is better than the mediaeval one of studding the calendar with holy days I incline to doubt, though I cheerfully accept the benefits of the existing system. But I hope it will not seem ungrateful to say that on my own island, where everybody will be his own boss anyhow, the calendar is to be rich with May Day Maypoles, Shrove Tuesday pancakes, and all such reasonable punctuation to the year. For as a sentence seems better begun

with a capital letter than without, and grace before meat turns eating into an ordered event, so the observance of time's human punctuation makes eternity almost homelike. The years are filled by it with familiar and well-loved landmarks.

What holidays the Arawaks and Caribs kept I can't determine, but their arts of merrymaking astonished the Spaniards. Queen Anacaóna's parties were the talk of Europe those first years after the discovery. When Bartholomew Columbus traveled to treat with her in Haiti, and her troupe of elegant but quite naked young ladies-in-waiting advanced from the groves to meet his army, singing ariettas and bearing garlands, the soldiers forgot their bawdy jests and babbled to one another of nymphs and dryads. And after the iguana feasts and the wrestling, dancing, and trials of strength performed at her command, there was so spirited a sham battle between detachments of her forces that four spearsmen were slain. The Spaniards, in fact, finding this part of the show too sanguinary, begged that it might end.

Such delicacy in after recollection must have seemed odd to Queen Anacaóna. When next she entertained a Spanish official, the party ended in another manner. After the ariettas and the feast this time, and after taking part heartily in a game of quoits, the new governor, Ovando, permitted his men to reciprocate with a tournament: it was a splendid show of horsemanship and knightly combat—but, as it fell out, a ruse. The "sham battle" concluded with the native chief guests being burnt alive in the queen's pavilion, while she, regal to the last, was hauled off to Santo Domingo and there hung. The islands' idyll was now well past. What the Old World wanted of the New was abject subserviency and cash profits.

In my year in the islands, however—except for Cuba, St. Barts, and America's recently acquired Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands—the West Indies were held by the powers that had held them a century before. The age of exploitation and of brawls for posses-

sion had mellowed into one of guardianship, more or less benign. The minor colonies, in fact, tended to lean on their masters' bounty. Thus, though there were grounds for discontent with government, as can be true also in places fully managing their own, the usual temper was one of pride: the Curaçaoans were glad to be Dutch, the Martiniquans to be French, and hearts swelled in the British islands when the great naval vessels entered port.

At the time of George VI's coronation, for example—a date recent but now strangely remote—Nevis marked the day with a pageant.

It was all very ambitious. Scene one having been set at Runnymede with the signing of Magna Carta, there were eight centuries of history to depict, which put a severe strain on local resources. But though Nevis is a poor, forgotten, black-man colony, its patriotism was equal to the test. Nelson's flagship, in papier-mâché was a triumph of engineering; horses of various shapes and sizes were found, sufficient to mount the grand review. As for the actors, though by no means were there enough white ones available to play all white roles and some of the kings and prime ministers thus had to be played by nonwhites, everybody put his heart into the effort and it came off well. James I's part was taken by the dentist, a colored man much respected; and when, in his kingly self, he united the thrones of Scotland and England, and decreed the translation of the Bible, some found the effect incongruous, but the general thought was that it was reverent and fine.

Bastille Day in French St. Martin was another case in point.

The colony is peopled by English-speaking Negroes for the most part, yet the national holiday there, in "my year," 1937, brought all elements into a round of festivity filled to its circumference with a patriotic readiness to be gay.

St. Martin is no great place, but as is usual in even quite unheard-of islands it has inhabitants going about the business of life as earnestly as if it were Chicago. Its history is pretty. Divided from the earliest times between Dutch and French, it was blessed with settlers who made it their policy not to fight Europe's wars among themselves; for which good reason the twenty square miles of French territory, and the eighteen of Dutch, to this day lie side by side at peace with each other within their common ring of surf.

When I looked down on Marigot, the capital of the French part, from the ruined fort that overhangs it on a rocky hill, it seemed certainly very tranquil. The lagoon lay as smooth as blue glass, and on the harbor bay, almost as calm, the reflected masts of the schooners twisted and broke but always redrew their wobbly image. A boat with fish for sale was plying among these larger craft; I could hear the conch shell moo; and from them, laboriously, lighters laden with casks were moving toward the shore.

The harbor was better filled with shipping than I should have anticipated. French St. Martin, as it happens, is attempting the service so long and profitably offered by St. Thomas—that of free port where shippers are not troubled by too many questions. Goods brought in go out again to destinations often vague: rum, as for instance in these casks from Demerara, passes into the hands of buyers whose vessels then disappear from marine intelligence. I heard Canada hazarded as a goal, but, as was the case in Nassau in Prohibition times, verifying such guesses is no matter for local concern.

The town looked innocent to be a smugglers' rendezvous,

tucked between the hill and the end of the lagoon's near arm. One street curved away down the isthmus separating lagoon from bay; the other ascended three blocks' distance to the Philipsburg-Grande Case road, on the far side of which a hoary stone fence cut it short, with pastureland beyond rising in bucolic neatness to the island's central heap of mountain.

All very nice! And just my size. Where the stubby wharf nosed out from among the trees, the house balconies on the quay caught the sun on their lacework panels. It was a treat to see that the notion that time is money had not bedeviled the carpenters who had made them. No, those craftsmen had been content with nothing less than beauty; and then, their jig saws laid aside, they had painted the fretwork as white as the sailboats drawn up below the sea wall arches—which whiteness in Marigot exceeds that of swans.

Next day was the Fourteenth and I was looking forward to it. However, I was hardly ready at six in the morning for the aerial bomb that exploded seemingly just outside the window. As if jarred as much as I was, the Catholic and Wesleyan bells woke in vociferous outburst, and the countryfolk already streaming by tucked their skirts or trousers up and broke into a run.

By the time I could swallow breakfast the boat races were well in progress. Never was anything seen trimmer than those white-rinded craft on that broad blue bay. And when the winners of each race, after touching the anchored dinghy that was the goal, stretched out their arms for the flamboyant boughs carried out by some swimmer for a trophy, the flowers' clear scarlet glowed in unison with the colors striped gaily around the sailboats' gunwales.

Meanwhile an Anguillan was performing on a slack rope strung up between two guinep trees; or when he was not, the local boys slipped their shoes off, guffawed, and made a try. The pavements swarmed with onlookers in their sprucest clothes; cars tooted in;

bombs dropped tricolor flags and glittering confetti. A band played, to whose music, as fancy urged, percussion effects and mouth organ chords were added liberally by nonband members. A rifle range was cleared on the wharf: my friends the Beaupéthery boys, whose sport was shark hunting, here shone decidedly.

The day's eating, too, soon began. "Plenty sweets!" cried one mulatto girl when I inquired what she had for sale. And with a grace to match the flutelike quality of her voice, down she swung the tray from her head and tucking its corner nosegay of red hibiscus and white double-jasmine behind her ear, unfolded a napkin to show coconut squares, cashew pralines, green and red lollipops on broomstraws, and gingerbread in pink-frosted true-love knots. Other hawkers sold like wares, or peanuts, or golden mangoes and bananas, or twigs of bright green guineps, the islands' grapes.

Marigot, in fact, was a picture to admire. The flare of hatbrims, the gay turban hues, the fancy cut of sideburns—all usual enough on an ordinary day—set one another off this day like signs in common of the joy of life. And the children, shading from coppery to black, were more than ever darlings, jigging to the band tunes and spitting guinep seeds.

At noon the official toast was drunk in the *Mairie* around a huge antique oval table. Squeezed on a settee between the Wesleyan parson and the agricultural director from the Dutch part of the island, I represented the United States of America with as much dignity as a tombstone man could muster.

If my Cold Spring cronies could only have seen me now!—Mayor Theisen especially: his island counterpart, Mayor Constant Fléming, performed with style. Seizing a glass and ripping out the toast in orotund French, he made me gulp ahead of time—it was not so much to *la patrie* that he bade us drink, as to democracy itself. But "*Vive la France*!" we thundered, draining our

glasses; and a spirited though muffled voice from the pantry where someone was taking a private swig, answered, "*Vive la liberté!*"

Then followed an address read by a colored man from a manuscript trembling with his fervor; then the *Vin d'Honneur*. Marianne, meanwhile, serene and noble in plaster of Paris on her bracket, gazed away under the low ceiling beams toward a less ceremonious part of the doings, to wit, the bicycle races in the street.

After lunch I hustled back to see the last of these. Nobody seemed to be in charge: the disorder was as titanic as anything could be on so small an island. But in spite of argument, one of the high and fancy or low and streamlined school of riders always seemed to win. There were three-legged races; and now and again I would find myself in the house of some patriot and well-wisher, trying rum poured from a battered coffeepot or rum-and-pineapple punch.

The waiter at the hotel, Jean, was in the soccer game, which gave me a personal interest in that roughhouse. Time being precious it also meant that he had to serve us at dinner in striped jersey and football shorts; casting a loaf of bread to the ceiling as he sprang into the room he caught it behind his back like an acrobat before slapping it on the table. Thank heaven, Mayor Fléming's claret, a-clink with ice cubes, cleared my gullet of the too-sweet taste of punch; and a whole lobster and leg of veal gave me strength to face the evening's rigors.

These took the form of a patriotic drama *Danton* in nine acts in a tent pitched for the purpose. I had been on the alert too long to follow even brief oratory now with zest, and our hero's style, though as clarion-like as the mayor's, was infinitely more extensive. My neck cracked repeatedly as weary head dropped forward.

But to the Revolutionary scenes, since the tent walls had been reefed up for coolness, the fireworks outside gave a rousing air of

realism. Nor did the explosions and sudden lights fail to lend point to the newsreel, which showed the European dictatorships in their most threatening mood:—Moscow, military review; Rome, the same; Berlin, ditto ditto; Madrid, ditto again. But Paris was different. In the flower market of the *Cité* there—the island heart of the republic—courtly old gentlemen were buying posies from big-aproned beaming women; at which juncture, whoosh! a rocket soared up past our briar-grown fort to shed over it the benediction of red-white-and-blue stars.

The excellence of Marigot's Bastille Day celebration lay in its unanimity. Everybody took part in it, even I, the stranger in town. The onlookers were like "the crowd" in a ballet, often involved in the larger motions of the piece; nobodies were constantly turning out to be star performers. And though in retrospect its lightheartedness now seems pathetic, it well fulfilled the purpose for which it had been ordained. For if such paroxysms of history as the French Revolution are to be commemorated, to do so with three-legged races and slack-rope dancing is not so much frivolous as it is appropriate: what are agonies good for if not to buy future lightness of heart?

So, too, in Trinidad at Hosein time when the swarms of East Indian Moslems have their chief festival, carrying gaudy transparencies at night to cast them into the sea with noisy pomp, it is hopeful to remember that these lanterns represent martyrs' tombs and that their frequently green coloring is a sign that one

martyr died of poison. His corpse bloated, the story is, and turned a horrid green.

Or the feast of All Saints in Martinique well illustrates the phoenixlike cheerfulness of mankind. For all its weight of memory of the dead and dolorous French crape, the occasion is made so pretty, when dusk falls, by the lights twinkling innumerably in the cemetery groves, that the islanders think of it as not the saddest but the loveliest of their festivals.

As for St. Rose of Lima, who ever made a more morbid specialty of suffering? I have no patience with the woman. But from the thorns of that life the French Creoles pluck a flower. In French-speaking Arima, in Trinidad, her day, August thirtieth, is Race Day, with the town jolly with bands and bunting. And in St. Lucia it is the colony's chief fête.

I am no long lier in bed, but in bed I still was when the "La Rose" songs began to be wafted up the hill that bright-misted St. Lucian morning. And after a sumptuous High Mass in which the good folk of Castries finely chanted their part as *Populus*, the festival songs were resumed in streets through which impromptu processions wound. "Wadeloes!" the Roses called their rival band the Marguerites, a taunt whose meaning has been lost in the fogs of folklore. The Frenchy old tunes, too, had had all the corners smoothed off them in nobody knows how many years of island use.

At night Castries was a whirl of dancing. "*Ba moin P.C.J. sans oua-oua*," at the International Café, was the demoniac calypso that made feet fly.* And near the harbor head a tarpaulin and palm-leaf bowery had been raised, in which a really large orchestra was perspiring. But bowery and cafés could not contain St. Rose's revels: wherever music reached a bit of pavement, *bal* and rumbas were in progress under the open sky.

* "Give me P.(ure) C.(ane) J.(uice) without water"—that is, neat rum.

However, if gloomy events can be commemorated gaily, happy ones can accrete to their commemoration high jinks that seem no less odd. While the Christmas toy fair Christianly prospers in Kingston, for example, the season is marked in Jamaica's farther parts by heathen weapon dances. In Stewart Town, for one such place, Johnny Canoe, whose prototype was a Guinea chief, leers at the fun from his horned mask, while cambric monsters lope about, hind- and forequarters animated by local wags, charging upon the half-delighted, half-terrified children.

In St. Kitts the cambric monster is plain Farmer John's Bull. Who knows, he may bear some kinship to the ox of Bethlehem. When his spirits sink in a fit of biliousness, however, and veterinary care is called for, the pantomimed examination and response to treatment are so sidesplittingly indelicate that the Christmas stable scene seems a far cry indeed. Meanwhile, firecrackers pop from one end of the Antilles to the other, and the poinsettias burn a fine seasonable red.

Carnival is the chief holiday time in the Catholic islands, and keeps its preëminence in those which in passing from French to British ways of thought have generally taken on a Protestant tone. In St. Vincent the governor awards a wand wrapped in bank notes to the cleverest band of entertainers; in Dominíca, too—still French-Catholic for all its long British rule,—carnival prizes are worth the winning. Jason Apperly told me of one winner who had disguised himself ingeniously as a hill. Yes, there was no front nor back to this fellow, he was one mass of hill vegetation, growing in concealed tins of earth slung about his body. The wonder was, how he could stand the ants. But what struck me most in Jason's account of Roseau Carnival was that the white people for once in the year cut loose in the blessed release of blackface and joined the monkeyshines.

Martinique's carnival was immortalized by Lafcadio Hearn,

who saw it in Poe-esque time of plague. But Trinidad's is the one of chief current fame in the Lesser Antilles: what most of the islands will sing all year and salt away in the deep bins of popular lore, is sung first in Port-of-Spain the week before Mardi Gras. Ach! to have been one of that tentful of lucky listeners, when "Netty, Netty," the classic calypso of my year in the islands, first convulsed the public!

The carnival I saw, however, was none of these, but Havana's, biggest of all—which event, since Sundays are not strictly a part of Lent, continues through half of it, in Sabbath re-eruptions of noisy gaiety.

Saturday nights likewise see the festivities in motion. One week it will be dancing in the parks, with colossal masked balls at the Asturian and Galician clubs; another, open-air vaudeville in the Cathedral Square—where the silhouette of the double-bass players in the orchestra, beyond the dark restless crowd, stand inky against the bright froth of kicked-up skirts, and antique arcades haughtily echo risqué songs.

The great thing on Sundays is the parade, but the word implies too studied an effort to be descriptive. There are floats, to be sure, elaborate set pieces to awe the eye: posed Columbuses for the historic touch, Neptunes in plaster shells for allegory, and bathing beauties to worry the thoughtful with their undress in the evening chill. As if Havana were Cold Spring, the fire department displays its crimson splendors. But even the most educational of such items scoot by at a dizzy pace; pushers-in egg them forward. For the anonymous participants in the show, numberless, tireless, and more than willing to be gay, make up the force that gives it life.

The youngsters of the García family, say, have hatched a plan with their little friends to ride to carnival in pirate dress. And after a great deal of sewing on the mothers' part, here they are,

cocked hats, cutlasses, and all, cramming the García car (top down) to bursting. *Papá* García, with false nose and big pink spectacles, drives. But *Mamá* meanwhile has done some stitching for herself. In long black cape, with other matrons of her circle, she rides in a truck, screaming broadcast whatever insult or inanity comes to mind: inhibitions can be forgotten, behind a mask and the legend, "Crazy Women!"

The Garcías and their friends, however, are but two entries in the spontaneous motorcade. Hundreds of like groups hatch like plans and hilariously join the fun. As dark deepens and the lamps half-hidden in the laurel trees begin to beam, the procession swells, until, overlong for its two-mile circuit, it doubles into parallels, rushing down Malecón, up Prado, down Prado, and up sea wall Malecón again. But the two lines are soon reunited by the web of confetti that they lavishly interweave.

A similar web, renewed as fast as broken, laces parade to onlookers, and them in turn to the strollers on the Prado's broad mid-strip of mosaic pavement. Freak hats and parasols are the rule in this middle zone, and carnival impudence, and the eating of endless sweets.

Where a lamp casts a spot of light through a gap in the laurels, some amateur will earn bravos with his homemade skit; or an inspired guitar player will set a knot of revelers to marching jauntily in squad. In front of the noses of the pompous, huge spiders are prone to dangle, and between pretty girls' breasts are thrust tickling pinches of flake confetti—after which last sort of exploit a courteously tipped hat is rewarded with an outraged pout, neither boy nor girl to be outdone in the comedy of decorum.

But no matter how thickly the crowd may press or how madly it may mill, the hawkers push through with their wares—orange ice in half orange skins, tin horns, trees of lollipops, Hitler moustaches, cornucopias of roasted nuts, watchmen's rattles, big crum-

bly doughnuts—and against the noise and music of it all, raise cries florid and beseeching.

Perhaps it was the Chinamen among these hawkers, stealing about silently with mysterious closed boxes, who all at once made me feel an alien. After hours of mixing in the fun, here I was, perched on a bench top eating coconut ice cream and being eaten in turn by lonesomeness. Home-sweet-homesick thoughts of Marigot rose to mind, of the toast we had drunk in the low-beamed *Mairie*, and the Dutch agricultural director's dog, as kind an Airedale as I ever knew. And then I was on the Fort hilltop once again, looking down lovingly on that small-island world.

Good heavens! why had I come away? Why had I left snug Tortola, sky-high Saba, or that New England village, Harbor Island? Could I hope to find anything nearer the heart's blue-print than St. Barts? The little places were the place for me. Columbus thought Cuba a continent and no wonder.

For a rebuke, suddenly I was on not Marigot's Fort Hill but a Haitian mountainside, a toppled-back gravestone for my seat. Never had the world looked vaster than from that philosopher's

roost that afternoon. The great Plaine du Cul de Sac, opalescent in sea level's heats, the range upon range of mountains beyond, had been ravaged, burnt, fouled with the stench of rotting corpses year after year in the New World's most gruesome war. What price liberty on this wicked planet! And the Haitians were still paying for theirs in poverty and dumb stubbornness. The very sea, half-hidden by the Lord knows high-enough Morne de l'Hôpital far below, seemed no cradle of islands, but a tongue stretched thirstily inland for fresh water.

But where the ideal is maintained at a cost so near insufferable, its reality has power: the purpling mountains were not an inch too lofty for that evening's peace, nor was their coloring one tint too imperial. Happy and humble, I called back greetings when a pair of blue-smocked mountaineers toiled by on the next knoll's trail; one such poor wayfarer had been buried beneath my gravestone. But no, it was a woman's, "aged," so the inscription ran, "115 years." It seemed a short life for a world so large. I pictured her in her old old age, in a scarlet turban, serenely smoking.

The loneliness of her grave, however, must have meant some singularity in her life. She had seen trouble enough, no doubt of that, in her long time, as her present-day heirs must see in theirs: from the coffee thickets and thatch villages that peppered the mountain flank, up rose a wistful dissonance of scraps of songs, scolding, big-lunged laughter, name-hollering, argument, children's calls—the old common noises of the human family. And for a while, for once, there in that mesh of sound, I seemed to hear with the clear ear of understanding.

Whop!

A wad of confetti had hit me on the nose, with which blow my ears reopened to the carnival din. A dressy quadroon, as if out of the bold old romantic naughty times, was riding by in a low-slung *volante*: her turban, glittering crucifix, and earrings, and the looped-up opulence of her skirts, made her seem not so much

picturesque as a sort of West Indian muse. I was glad her marksmanship was so good: we blew each other kisses. After all, I loved big Havana as much as I did small Marigot; now I had the good sense again to know it. And happily from around me the tight globe in which the traveler moves, and whose glass so usually is dingy, distortional, or (worse still) self-reflecting, receded to its best crystallinity. Perhaps it melted. At any rate the warmth of this world's fellow creatures became near and real.

In crowd or solitude, the rule would seem, the precious gift is a realization that life runs through the rest of creation as actually as through oneself. The carnival playboy uproariously kissing the girls, or the physicist groping for contact with his shy neighbor the atom—either comes nearest to satisfaction when that light shines on his enterprise. Hans Andersen, to whom the very street lamps were alive, is the travelers' philosopher: past times were the present, day by day, and in vital processes built the world we find.

But understanding toiled for is good not by virtue of the cost. After the struggle, when plain truth is our reward, the wonder is that it was not grasped in one easy motion, like some darky grandmother taking her small granddaughter in her arms. To the quiet mind grace can come as quickly as to the anxiously desirious—perhaps more quickly: such is my suspicion.

These sausage chains of platitude are nourishment and a comfort to the lazy man. I had finished the ice cream too, so hopped down friskily from my perch. The Havanese, meanwhile, in false noses and mad hats, brought their talents to bear on their inheritance, exercising it for health in the tomfoolery used by their forefathers before them. Yes, such observances are one means of keeping the cosmos in good trim.

There were novelties too, however, to fit the newer times. One, a float following the *volante*, had been devised for the tour-

ists' eyes—a snowbank well simulated, with Eskimos sitting on it and the top of a monument just protruding. "Here lies summer," was the epitaph, a message from the chamber of commerce straight to me.

To give the already broad hint more breadth, a second float showed summer's year-round habitation—a tropic isle, small, neat, and green. A canoe lay beached on its painted cove, hibiscuses bloomed red and alemandas yellow. There was a thatch-and-wattle cabin, and between two real coconut trees a hammock swung.

By a miracle the designer had managed not to crowd his picture. No, a fish-net weaver, singing, lolled against the wall, with a guitar player sprawled out beside him. A pretty girl smiled in the open door. Two children rode proudly with the driver. As for the hammock—could these bugged-out eyes deceive me?—it hung empty.

God send me memory of the Spanish word for "Stop!" Wasn't the island mine, damn this rush? I sprang to action while a resolve like concrete hardened in my breast.

But more resolute still was the old ghoul bashfulness. Along I hustled, jostling the startled merrymakers. Should I or shouldn't I?—oh, what a nincompoop! what a jackass! And then—and here is our tale's disgusting climax—at the Prado's top, like Dante feeding his gaze for the final time on Beatrice, I watched my darling turn, and start for the sea again.

Obispo Street was as still as a grave, and if anything blacker and more narrow. But into it I trudged, while two masked dominoes, hurrying toward the revelry I had left, only heightened its feeling of desertion. We bowed as we passed; their teeth gleamed an instant in mysterious smiles. And so to the Ambos Mundos and my hateful desk.

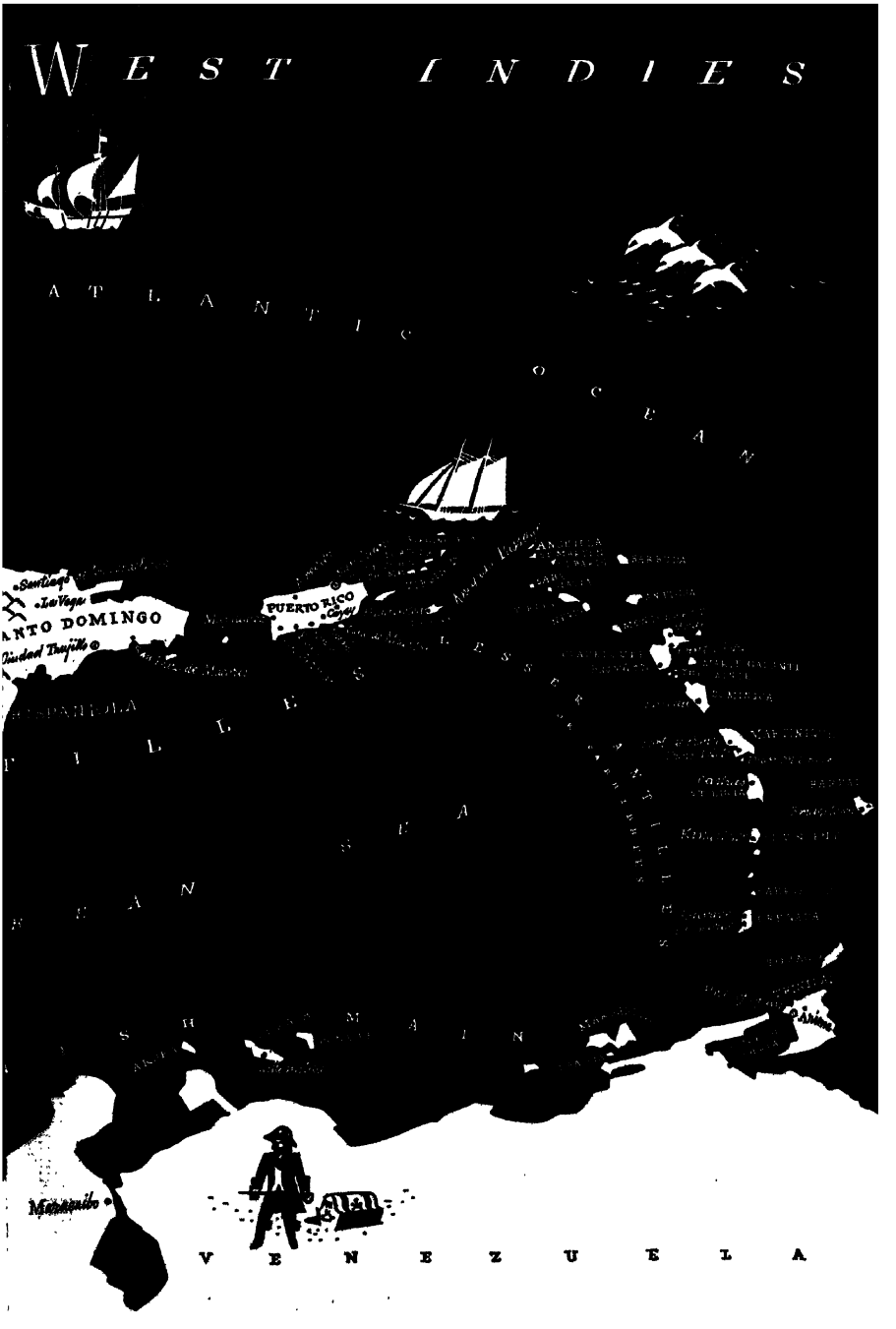
A murraine on the islands of the mind! Not armchair geog-

raphy was what I wanted, but real rock, and the rockier the better!

But it is pitiful to see how soon rejected pleasures can be welcomed back; the easy-to-hand, too, as a rule, are the kind I take. Napoleonic conquest has small lure for me. No, here were my old pals, the pen and inkwell, with whose help, in privacy, and with the much-loved West Indies for our reference, a bomb-proof island could be conjured up perhaps; free blessedly of fools, bad cooking, and insincerity. And one, of course, in which I should always shine. With which tickling fancy, while the cathedral's cracked bell tolled midnight, I kicked shoes off, hitched the chair up, and not unmerrily fell to.

THE END

T H E
Santa Cibao
Yaquay
Spirits
Comayagua
Golquin
JAMAICA
DURAS


WEST INDIES
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Santiago
La Vega
ANTO DOMINGO
Ciudad Trujillo
PUERTO RICO
Ponce
Mayaguez
SPANIOLA
Manzanillo
VENEZUELA